

University of San Diego

Digital USD

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

2006-05-01

The Effects of Participating in Youth Theater

Mark Plato Arapostathis EdD

University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Arapostathis, Mark Plato EdD, "The Effects of Participating in Youth Theater" (2006). *Dissertations*. 878.
<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/878>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATING IN YOUTH THEATER

by

Mark Plato Arapostathis

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
San Diego State University and the University of San Diego
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Dissertation Committee:

Leif Fearn, PhD, San Diego State University
Dana L. Grisham, PhD, San Diego State University
Donna Barnes, PhD, University of San Diego

May 2006

Copyright © 2006

by

Mark Plato Arapostathis

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to those who believe that the skills learned for theater will ensure success beyond the stage.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Effects of Participating in Theatre Arts
by

Mark Plato Arapostathis
Doctor of Education

San Diego State University and the University of San Diego,
2006

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of student participation in youth theater on the students. Research suggests that theater arts have aided in building student cognition and contributed to the development of literacy. Davenport (1999) concluded that the experience and knowledge that one gains from theater arts form the basic building blocks for the skills needed to learn and to become literate. He added that creative expression is the actual production of a work of art, and this direct, personal involvement provides the experience base upon which cognitive development occurs. This cognitive development has practical application that reaches beyond performing on a stage. Students apply the skills they learn in their academic pursuits.

This work represented students voices in order to explore how theater affects students beyond the stage and in their character development.

This study accomplished its purpose by surveying and interviewing students who have participated in P.A. Theater. Data analysis identified themes in the research that explain, in the students voices, how participation in the arts affect their choices in the theater and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
 CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Youth Theater	2
Benefits-Academic	5
Benefits-Social	8
Statement of the Problem	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Background	11
Research Question	14
Significance	14
Definition of Terms	15
Assumptions and Limitations	15
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	17
Effects of Theater Arts Education	17
The Arts and Learning	21
Character Education	24
Value of Student Voices	26

3	METHODOLOGY.....	29
	Sample Selection	31
	Data Collection	32
	Instrumentation	33
	Interviews	34
	Data Analysis	35
	Validity	36
4	FINDINGS.....	38
	Friendship/Fun/Social	41
	Discipline	44
	Theater Skills	48
	Quality Program	51
	Character/Social Skills	53
	Motivation/Hard Work/Final Product	56
	Being Part of a Team	60
	Leadership	63
	Confidence	67
	Summary	71
5	DISCUSSION.....	75
	How I Came To This Study	75
	Why It Matters	78
	Lessons Learned	78
	Lesson One.....	78
	Implications for Lesson One.....	85
	Lesson Two.....	87

Implications for Lesson Two.....	92
Lesson Three.....	95
Implications for Lesson Three.....	98
Summary	102
Future Research	103
Conclusion	105
REFERENCES.....	106
APPENDIX	
A SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	111
B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	113
C THEATER VOCABULARY.....	116
D P.A. BEHAVIOR STANDARDS.....	125
E CONSENT FORM.....	128

LIST OF TABLES

	PAGE
Table 1. Responses to Interview and Survey Questions.....	39
Table 2. Participant Demographics (Pseudonyms).....	40
Table 3. Interview and Survey Questions.....	41

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of a dissertation can be a lonely and isolating experience, yet it is obviously not possible without the personal and practical support of numerous people. Many people on the faculty and staff of San Diego State University and the University of San Diego assisted and encouraged me in various ways during my course of studies.

Thank you to my family and friends who endured years of having to cautiously avoid any subject that may lead to inevitable discussion of doctoral work.

I wish to thank Dr. Donna Barnes and Dr. Dana Grisham for their support and confidence when they agreed to embark on this odyssey with me. Their continual encouragement and support helped me reach this goal.

Thank you to the Critical Reading And Preparation group. To Brad Hamby and Jason Daniels for their patience and generosity while listening to the ranting of a doctoral student. To Dr. Dina Pacis for opening up her home as a doctoral hub throughout the program. To Dr. Cindy McDaniel, your BDF thanks you for your patience and understanding when explaining the obvious and mundane. To Dr. Erika Daniels for locking me in a room and not letting me out until a proposal

was formulated, and for always allowing me to use her house as a headquarters and answering my constant pleas for help. To Dr. Jennifer Hamby for not giving up on me and keeping me on track through encouraging and sometimes threatening emails.

Most importantly, thank you to Dr. Leif Fearn who has believed and encouraged me over the past 18 years. Dr. Fearn never doubted me even when I doubted myself. His insight and knowledge have always been an inspiration to me. Dr. Fearn is the definition of educator. He truly walks the path and consistently maintains high expectations for himself and his students. I am humbled that he is my teacher and honored to be considered his friend.

Thank you to my brother Evan, my best friend, who has always supported and encouraged me in all my endeavors.

Finally, to the greatest teacher I have known in or out of the classroom, my mother, Elaine Arapostathis. Her support, wisdom and love have carried me into and through many ventures that I never thought I would be strong enough to complete. Any success I have had in life is because of my mother.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Mr. A wants us to be more than just great actors on stage. He wants us to be great people in life."

Alison is a 7th grade student among the hundreds of cast members who have participated in nearly three dozen major musical theatrical performances over the last 35 years of Performing Arts Theater. The question is, is Alison's experience unique among the cast members, or does she reflect a pattern of influence on students who participate in junior theater?

To what extent do theater the arts, specifically youth theater, offer a potentially powerful opportunity to aid, enhance, and reinforce the learning experience for all students?

Children's theater has always existed in America, perhaps not as it does today in specialized theaters that exclusively cater to children, but certainly at its most rudimentary level of play. Children's play can become a theatrical experience. When children play games like "Cowboys and Indians" and "School", they develop rules and parameters for each game. In

addition, they assign characters, create settings, and develop plots. These types of behaviors are consistent with basic elements of theater. In a very informal way, children develop their very own theater and productions every time they go into their backyard to play.

Davidson (1996) suggested that while children play, they are able to create characters, define plot, and devise props. Furthermore, they integrate a variety of scripts into complex pretend games and take small suggestions or ideas and develop them into longer, more elaborate scripts.

Regan and Weltsek (2000) stated that youth theaters have always played a significant part in the overall child drama movement in the United States. Youth theaters in America often began as outreach programs of civic-minded groups like the Junior League or as recreational outlets and community recreation developments. The values and benefits of youth theater have always existed but have only recently been acknowledged and esteemed through research.

YOUTH THEATER

Theater arts have long struggled to find a respected role in the American school curriculum (Chen, 1999). During the first part of the twentieth century, teaching the arts in public schools was dependent upon the financial support of the

federal government. As Willing (2001) detailed, many of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal projects centered on the arts, and efforts prompted schools to be similarly involved in arts education. However, during the middle of the twentieth century, the race in science and technology increased, and moved attention away from the arts.

Walling (2001) illustrated that after the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik in 1957, the emphasis in American schools swung dramatically toward mathematics and science. Cutbacks in funding forced schools to make difficult choices. They needed to eliminate arts and music programs in order to fund curriculum in science and math. Walling (2001) also noted that it wasn't until almost twenty years later that arts education began to creep back into the national consciousness.

When *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 (U.S. Dept. of Education), politicians across America focused their campaigns on improving education. During his 1991 candidacy, President George H. W. Bush proclaimed that he would be the "education president." His campaign platform, known to the public as America 2000, called for educational reform through the implementation of six national goals. They were:

- All children in America will start school ready to learn.
- The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

- All students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.
- U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
- Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Tellingly, the arts were not included in these goals (Swanson, 1991). With the beginning of the Clinton administration in 1993, national educational goals were revised to include national standards in the curricular areas of arts education. The standards gave educators specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors in each curricular area. National standards in the arts were discipline-specific to dance, music, visual arts, and theater. Following the pattern of the national standards in the arts, each state was responsible for creating standards that would be tailored to the needs of each region. The California State Standards in Arts, which were adopted by the state school board in January

2001, are area-specific and categorized into four areas. The areas are dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

Specifically in the area of theater, the California Content Standards are written for children in grades ranging from Pre-kindergarten through grade 12. For each grade level there are five curricular foci; Artistic Perception, Creative Expression, Historical and Cultural Context, Aesthetic Valuing, and Connections, Relationships, and Applications. The State of California adopted mandated standardized tests in the other four curricular areas of English, mathematics, social science, and science. However, currently in the State of California there are no standardized tests that measure the ability and aptitude in which students have become proficient in the arts. In January 1994, the arts were written into federal law as part of the Goals 2000: Educated America Act (O'Brien, 2002). The law acknowledges that the arts are a core subject, as important to education as English, mathematics, history, civics, government, geography, science, and foreign language.

BENEFITS-ACADEMIC

Theater arts provide a bridge of relevance to the curriculum and encourage participation across possible barriers such as language or gender. In general, students

gain the confidence to execute the social graces of extending their hand, looking a person in the eye, and introducing themselves. These elements of social growth are fostered though a student's participation in drama (McCaslin, 1981). Students envision an understanding and acceptance of themselves. Then they mature socially by learning how to accept and share with others.

The use of drama was once confined to the areas of language arts and English. Today, however, drama spans the curriculum, and its implementation reveals its usefulness and effectiveness as an instructional tool. Creative drama "provides an opportunity for participation in activities that require students to role play, to analyze roles, and to work cooperatively in creative tasks" (Freeman, Sullivan, and Fulton, 2003).

Furthermore, students' ability to assimilate information from a text is enhanced when combined with their participation in theater. For example, when students are reading a piece of literature i.e.: *Oliver Twist*, and are engaged in the performance of the play *Oliver*, their ability to understand and comprehend the text increases. Smith (1982) contended that children's participation in theater can aide their understanding of many school subjects.

Wright (1994) concluded that the inclusion and integration of fine and performing arts activities into the curriculum offers a viable strategy for student motivation and success. Students who have a difficult time expressing themselves during traditional paper-and-pencil tests may be better able to demonstrate their knowledge through a performance-based assessment (Gee, 1999). An education in the performing arts provides students with a rich environment in which to create and grow (Wright, 1994).

Several studies (The State of Our Nation's Youth, 2003-2004; The College Board, 2000-2002) attempted to demonstrate the validity of arts education through a relationship between students' participation in the arts and an increase in academic performance, specifically as determined by test scores. In an effort to justify the existence of the arts in schools on the basis of their contributions to non-art outcomes, studies have been conducted to establish the intrinsic value and "real world" skills acquired through the participation in arts education (Eisner, 1999).

Other studies focused on an individual area of the arts such as performing arts and drama, and how the benefits of their implementation in the schools positively affected students in all subject areas. A common argument by the proponents of arts education is that drama enhances a

student's understanding of a particular subject area. For example, in the case of social studies, Ronald Morris (1998) classified drama as authentic assessment. Not only is drama suited to the way in which young children learn, but they are more likely to retain information taught through drama because it is multi-sensory; it gives a visual, physical, and verbal representation of the idea (George, 2000). Thus, the attempt was made to validate the use of drama in the classroom by correlating it with students' success in their demonstration of acquired knowledge. Due to the small amount of data this idea was not universally accepted.

In addition to proclaiming academic success as a positive outcome for students who participate in arts education, studies also conclude that such programs strengthen children's self-confidence, social skills, and physical and emotional well-being. Study of the performing arts then is recognized as a useful approach for building social skills (Courtney, 1995; Jendyk, 1981).

BENEFITS-SOCIAL

Although many school mission statements state that academics are the primary reason for attending school, the social development of students cannot be ignored. School aged children learn to take turns, learn to communicate their

thoughts, make their needs known through their day-to-day experiences. Effective teachers understand the importance of helping students function socially as well as academically (Lane, 2006).

Schools and teachers are being held accountable for educating students in the area of ethics and morals-the very heart of character education (Rasband, 1999). Most educators and parents agree on what constitutes the core ethical values and the need for students to be schooled on such principles (Bolotin, 2005). In a poll conducted by ABC News in 1999, 73 percent of Americans believed that good character and manners among children were worse now than they were 20 or 30 years ago. The poll also revealed that participants mainly put the blame and responsibility on unsatisfactory parenting (Luddy, 2000). In addition, they agree that the teaching of character education is a valuable practice which yields life long benefits. Finally, when character education is included in a theater arts program, students will learn skills that will benefit them beyond the stage.

Therefore, skills that will be used throughout their lives may aid in the transition to adulthood. The transition will be eased because students have learned the skills that are valued and required in the adult world.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Skeptics are quick to point out that the measuring tools used in the studies cited above all have an inherent flaw. With all the published material claiming the arts promote academic achievement scores to increase, or that the arts courses "strengthen" academic performance, it is often difficult to identify the basis on which the claims are made (Eisner, 1999). In the case where students' SAT scores were used to measure the success of an arts program, the question arises whether students who elect to study the arts have the same academic background as those who never took an arts course (Catterall, 1998).

The one constant in much of the research is the way in which the data are collected. Conclusions seem to rely either on students' performances on tests, or on the observations and testimonials of parents, teachers, and principals (Catterall, 1999). Very little data seem to have been collected with respect to the students' perceptions and attitudes regarding the benefits of an arts education program. In those rare cases where student voices are solicited, it is for affirmation of whether a program is "fun" (Catterall, 1999).

In addition, theaters typically limit the benefits of their programs to strengthening children's acting, singing and dancing skills and neglect some peripheral skills that are not

directly related to the abilities acquired by performing on stage (Eisner, 1998). A review of the research reveals that two elements are under-represented in America's youth theater. Those elements are understanding the value of community, and developing strong character. To what extent do theater the arts offer a potentially powerful opportunity to aid, enhance, and reinforce the learning experience in these areas for all students?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine how participants in P.A. Theater, specifically in the East County School District, view and define their experiences. This study will investigate and reveal the perceptions of current cast participants as well as cast members from the past 30 years.

BACKGROUND

In 1970, Sam Clemens a fifth grade teacher, started a little theater group to meet the needs of talented students within the East County School District. It began as the traditional school play at Bob Kuhne Elementary School under Mr. Clemens's direction. Mr. Clemens had been a part of the Southern California theater community for several years performing in shows at professional and community theaters.

The shows he staged at Bob Kuhne Elementary included elementary students from grades three through six.

In 1974, Mr. Clemens was transferred to Orange Elementary where he continued to produce after-school shows at his new school. For the first eleven years, the cast was chosen from students of one school only, but as the annual production's popularity grew, talented students from other schools began to show an interest. Cast sizes continued to increase- and auditions were opened to students throughout the district. P.A. Theater was formed when the district Superintendent asked Mr. Clemens to distinguish his theater group apart from other site based school performances.

In 1980, auditions for P.A. Theater were opened to students throughout the district. Until 1987, P.A. Theater staged its productions at Orange Elementary School, with auditions and rehearsals held at various school facilities after school and on weekends. The popularity of the shows increased and the size of the cast and the audience grew, outgrowing the auditorium at Orange Elementary School. In 1988, P.A. Theater used the East County Arts Center as its theater home. After one year, the theater moved their performances to the local university's theatre, where they remained for fourteen years.

In 2003, P.A. Theater moved once again to the MacDonald Community Theater. All auditions and rehearsals are also held there.

P.A. Theater has always been an all-volunteer organization that is entirely self-sufficient. The La Mesa/Spring Valley School District provides rehearsal facilities, but P.A. Theater does not receive any other financial aid from the district. Parents whose sons and daughters are involved in the production raise most of the funding. Typically, the cost of a P.A. Theater musical involving 60 to 80 students is approximately \$40,000. It is unusual for a group of parents to provide this level of support for a junior theater, but these are parents who truly believe in children and the arts.

Over the years, talented teachers who have a background in the arts have played an integral role in each production as designers, choreographers, vocal directors, orchestra directors, and musicians. Often, high school and college students who were once P.A. Theater actors return to help backstage, as production team members, as the stage manager, or in other ways. One such student, the researcher, went on to study theater in college and returned to become the Director of P.A. Theater. Known as Mr. A, I have played the lead in many P.A. Theater productions since the 4th grade. I worked

side-by-side with Mr. Clemens in many capacities, including serving as Artistic Director. In total, I have been involved with P.A. Theater for 30 years.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does participation in theater arts influence upper elementary and middle school students? Students' self-reports from conversations with previous participants reveal, that P.A. Theater has a profound influence upon them. Characteristics such as self-discipline, various theater skills, and confidence in social settings are some predicted themes based on previous conversations. The purpose of this study was to systematically verify or refute the anecdotal evidence.

SIGNIFICANCE

This research adds to the body of literature available to provide specific information for classroom teachers about the value of theater arts to the comprehensive curriculum. There continues to be a need for sound research to identify specifically what the benefits are to students participating in a youth theater program.

The focus of this study is exploration of short-and long-term effects on students involved in performing arts, as reported by the participants. The preponderance of research

has reported on the benefits of participation in theater arts as measured by academic test scores, or the "enjoyment" that participants experience. Less evidence is available that examines the influences of youth theater through the voices of the participants themselves.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Youth Theater - Theater performed by youth, ages 7 to 18.
- Performing Arts - Includes theater, drama, comedy, music, dance, opera, magic, and the marching arts, such as brass bands.
- Performers - Artists who participate in the performing arts; these include actors, comedians, singers, dancers, and musicians.
- Character Education - Is most often defined as teaching a set of agreed-upon values and traits.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

One limitation to this study is that the investigator is both theater company director and researcher. It is critical that the investigator is constantly aware of inevitable subjectivity, choices of methodology, the nature of survey and interview items and how interviews are conducted. To control to the extent control is possible, the investigator capitalized on dispassionate colleagues for theme formation from the scripted interviews.

This investigation utilized a sample of convenience. Though students in P.A. Theater are under no obligation to

participate, the sample was selected from students who were currently participating, or were past participants in the P.A. Theater.

As this is a study limited to one youth theater program, there is a need for replication to determine the effects that such a program more generally has on youth theater participants. Different ages of participants and/or different sample configurations from several programs could affect results.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because this study focuses on the lived theater experiences of school-age children, the literature review will discuss research on theater arts and its influence on academic and social development.

Educators continually strive to identify new techniques to motivate and to interest students in the learning process. In today's media-saturated world, teachers have found they must use more than repetitive exercises to hold the attention of children and adolescents. Neuman (1991) agreed that a majority of children's recreation time is isolated in front of television or video games instead of participating in community activities.

In alignment with the research question guiding the study, this chapter investigates the following question: What is the result of participation in theater arts on upper elementary and middle school students?

EFFECTS OF THEATER ARTS EDUCATION

Glass and Nemeth (2003, ¶3) quote the American Federation of Teachers president Sandra Feldman as saying, "While we must

be careful not to overstate the link between the arts and improved academic skills, the evidence is mounting that high-quality arts education programs can have a positive effect on student learning, motivation, interest and attendance."

Theater arts have aided in building student cognition and contributed to the development of literacy. Davenport (1999) concluded that the experience and knowledge that one gains from theater arts form the basic building blocks for the skills needed to learn and to become literate. He added that creative expression is the actual production of a work of art, and this direct, personal involvement provides the experience base upon which cognitive development occurs. This cognitive development has practical application that reaches beyond performing on a stage. Students apply the skills they learn in their academic pursuits.

For a student to become a confident and strong reader, he or she must develop fluency and accuracy. Prescott (2003) found that drama, specifically Readers' Theater, is not only fun and natural for children, it also encourages emotional growth, motivation, engagement, and has been found to be particularly effective in building reading fluency. She cited a U.S. Department of Education booklet titled "Put Reading First" that stated Readers' Theater provides readers with a legitimate reason to reread text and to practice fluency; also

it promotes cooperative interaction with peers and makes the reading task appealing. The aforementioned research would suggest that there exists a legitimate connection between participating in theater arts and academic achievement.

In 1995, The Arts Education Partnership (formerly known as the Goals 2000 Arts Education Partnership) was formed. It is a private, nonprofit coalition of more than 100 national education, arts, business, philanthropic, and government organizations that demonstrate and promote the essential role of arts education in enabling all students to succeed in school, life, and work. The Partnership was formed through a cooperative agreement between the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the U. S. Department of Education, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

In 1999, the Arts Education Partnership published seven major studies entitled *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. This study was conducted jointly with The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities to examine what the effects were on students who participated in arts activities.

The study concluded that "When well-taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts and bodies. The learning

experiences are real and meaningful for them" (p. ix). In addition, "While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts regularly engage multiple skills and abilities. Engagement in the arts – whether the visual arts, dance, music, theatre or other disciplines – nurtures the development of cognitive, social and personal competencies" (Champions of Change, 1999, p. ix).

Furthermore the Champions of Change Study found: The arts connect students to themselves and each other. Creating an artwork is a personal experience. The student draws upon personal resources to generate the result. The student feels invested in ways that are deeper than simply knowing the answer (p. ix).

The Champions of Change goes on to explain that the arts alter the environment for education. When the arts become vital to the learning situation, schools and other settings become places of innovation. Symbolic walls between classrooms and curriculum are eliminated. Teachers are changed. Even the facade of a school building is altered when learning takes place through the arts. This study concluded by stating:

The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people. With adults participating in lifelong learning, young people gain an understanding that learning in any field is a never-ending process. The roles of the adults are also changed: In effective programs, the adults become coaches, active facilitators of learning. The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful. Boredom and complacency are barriers to success. For those young people who outgrow their regular learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge. The arts

connect learning experiences to the world of real work. The world of adult work has changed, and the arts learning experience shows remarkable consistency with the evolving workplace. Ideas are what matter, and the ability to generate ideas, to bring ideas to life and to communicate them is what matters to workplace success. And learning subjects through the arts can help connect education to real life experiences (p. ix).

Schwarzman (2002) observed that the investigations that were conducted in the report produced by the Champions of Change were all done independently of each other, and similarities and themes began to emerge in their findings. First, the arts reach students who are not otherwise reached. For example, the arts provided a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for at-risk youth to remain engaged with school or other organizations. If students struggle with reading or math, they would stay in school solely to participate in the art, drama, or music program. "Problem" students often became the high-achievers in arts learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning (Arts Education Partnership).

THE ARTS AND LEARNING

In today's political climate that emphasizes accountability through testing and standards, it is imperative to find ways to engage all students. As high standards are supported through the regulation of instruction and the

uniformity of expected student responses, it is important to keep in mind that the relationship between original insight and powerful learning is a function of imagination in an educational setting (Caine, 2004). The arts can provide a bridge to academic achievement for students who may struggle in school.

Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994) considers the body, brain, and mind as a united system that works together to make sense of specific events, showing the whole system involved in powerful learning. The use of performing arts as role-playing only helps to strengthen students' ability to use their minds and imaginations.

Caine (2004) insists that for students to be able to recognize how items are related, or connect, students should be allowed to release their imaginations within the classroom. "Neither learning nor creative insight are possible in the absence of imagination" (Caine, 2004, p. 12).

One way that the use of imagination can be fostered is through drama. Sternberg and Garcia (1989) observed how drama supported the understanding of literature. Students reacted positively to investigations of material that inspired their imaginations, allowing them to convey their feelings, and construct a clear rapport with characters and circumstances. "One reason that drama is such an effective tool for the

development of metacognition is that students preparing a scene are actually re-creating an entire story, rather than simply recalling bits of what has been read" (McMaster, 1998).

Students who are involved in performing arts often rehearse their scene, or read their lines, having to depend on their visualization skills to imagine where the play, or scene, is taking place. These are the same visualization skills that Bell (1991) suggests helps those who clearly comprehend what they read. She contends that strong readers visualize information in a story in its entirety instead of trying to keep track of separate parts. Her work, which is positioned in cognitive and developmental psychology, indicates that the imagination is an effective instrument for learning, and a significant element of memory.

Ross and Roe (1988) assert that drama involves similar skills that are essential for reading comprehension, such as an awareness and ability to articulate the facts of the plot, characters, storyline, cause-and-effect relationships, vocabulary, motives, main events, and the capability to discern the tone of the selection.

In addition to the academic and social benefits, integrating the arts into school curriculum creates opportunities for teachers and students to explore the elements of character education.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

On January 23, 1997, President Clinton used a State of the Union Address to challenge all schools to teach character education, to teach values and productive citizenship (Davis, 2003). This is not a new stance toward character education. In the early 20th century, Theodore Roosevelt said, "To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace society" (Lickona, 1993, p. 6). Lickona went on to say that the elements of Character Education have existed for centuries in education, but the term (Character Education) did not come about until the 1980s. Teachers, parents, and civic leaders have long toiled over how to foster and ensure moral and character development in the youth (Pearson, 2000). Therefore, the term Character Education was created to give a name to curriculum that seemed to exist outside content standards.

Unlike other academic subjects (e.g., history, mathematics, language arts) for which common definitions exist, no such common definition seems to be available for Character Education. Character Education is most often defined as teaching a set of an agreed-upon values and traits to students in school. DeRoche (1998) states:

The public feels there is a state of moral decline because they have witnessed well-documented 'snapshots' over the past two decades of a range of

social ills, including dysfunctional families, drug use and abuse, irresponsible sexual behavior, high school dropouts, the rise of vandalism, stealing, cheating, the apparent lack of role models (a confusion between heroes and celebrities), and a general sense that many of our youth have lost qualities of civility, respect, and responsibility. (p.2)

In response to a growing public concern that the behavior of today's youth is declining at an alarming rate, many schools and school districts have begun to adopt programs which attempt to reinforce positive behavior among their students. Many of these programs begin by defining those traits that lie at the core of becoming a person of good character. DeRoche (2001) explains that effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society, in particular, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, caring, justice and fairness, civic virtue, and citizenship.

In another study, Viadero (2003) concluded that when teachers have included character education in their classroom curriculum, their students have higher scores on tests that measure cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. In addition, she found there to be fewer instances of classroom behavior problems and an increase in student achievement in core content subjects. The elements of Character Education teach students skills that will benefit

their lives in the future and creates safe educational environments that foster learning.

The long-term benefits of teaching ethics and good character to students are revealed as those students mature and reach adulthood. In order to ensure that today's youth will become adults of good character, we must educate them in the ways of good character (Lickona, 1992). When students are encouraged to use the traits of good character on a daily basis, those attributes begin to define the student. For example, for a student to become a caring person, they must perform caring actions. In this way they will develop their own commitment to that principle (Lickona, 1992).

VALUE OF STUDENT VOICES

Most educators enter the profession with a desire to do what is right for children. Ironically, many educators neglect to ask students themselves what they care about, want, and need. Although sparse, there is a growing body of research that recognizes the importance of listening to student voices (Cushman, 2003; Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005; Pope, 2001).

The studies that do exist that privilege student voices are powerful because the students are articulate, clear, and concise when giving feedback and suggestions to the teachers, parents, and other adults in their lives (Oldfather, 1994).

There seems to be a void in the field of educational research that focuses on a student's feelings and emotions as experienced during their scholastic careers. Erickson and Schultz, (1992) Handbook of Research on Curriculum, wrote:

In sum, virtually no research has been done that places student experience at the center of attention. We do not see student interests and their known and unknown fears. We do not see the mutual influence of students and teachers or see what the student or the teacher thinks or cares about during the course of that mutual influence. . .Rarely is the perspective of the student herself explored (p. 467).

An important and valid approach to research is being neglected when research is designed to focus on how students' participation in a program will affect them excludes the perceptions and attitudes of the very students at the center of the study. Erickson and Schultz, (1992) Handbook of Research on Curriculum, went on to say:

The absence of student experience from current educational discourse seems to be a consequence of systematic silencing of the student voice. Most fundamentally, student experience goes unheard and unseen for what appears to be ideological reasons. The commonsense view of educational practice, of what is most important to pay attention to in and about schools, left little room indeed for the points of view of the very persons who are the first-level consumers of educational services (p. 481).

The voices of early teenage students are almost never heard. However, when those students are approved and solicited regarding their opinions on experiences they have

had, they are able to express their thoughts clearly and concisely (Storz and Nestor 2003).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to systematically capture students' perceptions of their experience in the P.A. Theater. Additionally, this study examined the thoughts and perceptions of former students who had exited the program. In order to quantify their perceptions, the following research question was investigated: What is the effects of participation in theater arts on upper elementary and middle school children?

In order to explore the research question, and satisfy the purposes of the study, the researcher used a case study methodology (Stake, 1995). The researcher used survey data and interviews to explore the lived experiences of youth theater participants, obtaining detailed stories about many past and current theater participants. These stories have been combined to create a collective case study. A collective case study allows us to study several cases in order to understand a larger phenomenon (Stake, 1995). In this case, the phenomenon being investigated was the influence of the P.A. Theater program on children in grades four through eight. Case study

methods allowed the researcher to answer the research question most effectively by identifying patterns that would occur in real life in order to illustrate issues for the research community (Stake, 1995). Data were collected by surveying past participants involved with P.A. Theater and interviewing students who were, at the time, involved in the P.A. Theater program.

After receiving written permission from all parents and guardians and obtaining signed assent forms from all prospective subjects, I randomly chose twenty students who were actively enrolled in the current theater program to interview. To select the students, I categorized the students by grade and gender. In other words, I sorted students by grade level fourth through eighth grade and then further sorted the participants into gender groups. Finally, I used a stratified random sample to obtain participants for this study.

Once the participants were selected, the investigator conducted in-depth interviews with each of the twenty participants to elicit personal stories and narratives. These interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (Creswell, 1998) and were used to obtain stories about the participants' experiences in P.A. Theater. Through the words used in the interviews, the researcher gained insight into the

participants' thoughts, which allowed an analysis of the students' narratives (Seidman, 1991). This provided the resources to explore the meaning and relationships these stories had with regard to the students' participation in the theater program. The in-depth interviews provided a forum for the participants to tell their stories about lived experiences as theater participants.

In addition to the interviews, 350 surveys were sent to former theater participants. These surveys consisted of a modified version of the same five questions that were asked of the interview participants. These surveys required the participants to give short answer responses, and then to rank those responses in order from one to three, one being the most important. In effort to ensure that the surveys were not biased to elicit only positive answers, an outside observer read and provided feedback on the survey questions. The results of these surveys were used to support and provide a more detailed understanding of the interview participant's narratives (Creswell, 1998).

SAMPLE SELECTION

Data collection occurred at a middle school in a small inland town in the southwestern United States. The middle school was used for the primary rehearsal space for P.A.

Theater play rehearsals. While the middle school only enrolled sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, the eighty-five study participants who use the rehearsal space came from twenty-two different schools within the school district. The eligible students for this study were fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students from twenty-two schools that serve students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

To explain the purpose of the study, and the time commitment to the parents and the students, a letter was sent to all potential participants asking for parental permission. All surveys were numerically coded in order to assure parents that their children's identities would remain anonymous. In addition, the investigator was the only person who had access to the students' names. All data were kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's locked office.

DATA COLLECTION

During the fall of 2005, the investigator contacted the superintendent of the school district to explain the proposed study and obtained permission to conduct research with the district's students. In addition, I wrote to each principal where the participants attended school and explained the purpose of the study. Once I obtained permission from the

district superintendent, I submitted the proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once the dissertation committee and the university IRB committee approved the proposal, the investigator compiled a mailing list of all current and former P.A. Theater students. The mailing list was used to send surveys to 350 past theater participants. A self-addressed stamped envelope was included in the mailing.

INSTRUMENTATION

I used two data-collection instruments: an information survey (Appendix B) and an interview protocol (Appendix C). On the information survey, the investigator asked questions about the participants' experiences in P.A. Theater.

During the interviews the investigator used an interview guide with specific questions to be asked to ensure the investigator followed the same protocol for each subject. In addition, the investigator asked follow-up questions to give the participants the opportunity to clarify their initial answers. Unlike the interview guide, which followed a prescribed sequence of questions, the follow-up questions were asked as needed (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). When interviewed skillfully and with consciousness of class, race, and age, children can be thoughtful about their experience in and out of school and are capable of reflection that is informative

and compelling (Seidman, 1991). During the interviews the investigator tape-recorded and later transcribed each session in order to ensure accuracy and to be able to further analyze specific responses. Parent permission, as well as participant permission, was obtained in written form before recording any interview.

INTERVIEWS

In an adaptation of Stake's (1995) work on interviewing in qualitative research, I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 current cast members. These interviews were in addition to the 100 surveys received from former theater participants. I asked the students about their experiences as a cast member (both positive and negative) during the rehearsal process and the experiences they had during the performance of the show. The questions were written at an age-appropriate level to ensure that participants would be able to understand what was being asked. It was important to me that students describe their lived experiences truthfully and accurately. This helped compose a concise picture of the actual events they had gone through. In addition, to avoid the possibility of influencing their answers, I asked general open-ended questions that gave the respondents freedom to interpret and personalize events through their own lens.

After I completed all the interviews and had analyzed the data again, I scheduled a final meeting with each student. Each student was given a brief summary of his/her interview, and was asked for clarification or comments regarding the interpretation. This final meeting functioned as a litmus for analysis of the student's responses. It also allowed me to make any needed changes to the participants' stories in order to ensure I correctly interpreted their words.

DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative methods were used to render an accurate understanding of the students' perceptions of their experiences. Qualitative research is useful because it allows the researcher to explore in-depth answers which reveal the complexity of real-life, and it also seeks to explore the "why" (Marshall, C. & Rossman, G., 1989). Analysis is a systematic means of dissecting an experience and then making meaning from each piece (Polkinghorne, 1988; Stake, 1995). While reading the interview transcriptions I coded each response. Next, I looked for emerging themes and cultural models that best represented the shared experiences of the student participants.

The emerging themes were created by the students' voices and stories. The investigator looked for similar and

reoccurring words and phrases given by the participants. When creating the themes the investigator tried to use the words generated by the participants themselves. The fact that the themes were created by using the students' words helped ensure the information analyzed was accurate and best reflected the students' opinions and perceptions.

In addition to personally coding each survey and interview response, I distributed 5 copies of each survey and interview transcript to 5 independent researchers who, with no other involvement in the study. They read each response, coded each reply, and drew independent conclusions regarding emergent themes. Their findings were used to corroborate my findings to prevent bias and subjectivity.

VALIDITY

It is acknowledged that the researcher's preconceptions and perspectives could influence data analysis; however, a true qualitative study embraces these influences and attempts to gain understanding of the interactions between a researcher and his/her personal beliefs without compromising validity and reliability (Maxwell, 1996).

To ensure the validity of conclusions, I instituted several methods of data collection and analysis to maximize control. Beyond gathering a large number (100) of survey

responses, I recruited 5 impartial researchers to co-analyze the data. Each additional researcher then read each of the 100 surveys, coded them independently, and suggested emerging themes that were then compared to the original analysis I performed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose was to investigate the effects of student participation in youth theater. This study focused on the research question: What is the result of participation in theater arts on upper elementary and middle school students? This qualitative study provided an opportunity for current and former participants of P.A. Theater to reflect on and share perceptions of their experiences while members of the current and former cast. Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that qualitative methodology values people's perceptions of their worlds and seeks to use their own words as primary data. As discussed in Chapter 3, qualitative research allows the researcher to systematically examine the depth and complexity of real life and seeks to explore the "why" of experiences while addressing actual, not stated, behaviors and goals. It allowed me to investigate how former participants perceived their experiences.

After analyzing the data from surveys and one-on-one interviews, I identified the themes and patterns that emerged from the students' stories. These themes were selected because

they represented the largest number of common responses. Table 1 shows the percentage of participants' responses to questions in descending order of frequency.

Table 1. Responses to Interview and Survey Questions (N = 120)

Theme	Percentage of Respondents
Friendship/Fun/Social	83% 99 of 120
Theater skills	80% 96 of 120
Quality program	77% 92 of 120
Being part of a team	73% 88 of 120
Character/Social skills	71% 85 of 120
Confidence	68% 82 of 120
Leadership	66% 79 of 120
Discipline	63% 76 of 120
Motivation/Hard work/ Final product	56% 67 of 120

In this chapter, I discuss each of the above listed themes using the words of the subjects who participated in the interviews and/or filled out the surveys. The reader will also meet 20 fourth through eighth grade students, four from each

grade, half were girls and half were boys, who spoke with me at length about their theater experiences. Comments written by the other 100 survey respondents will also be used to elaborate on or echo the stories told while conducting the in-depth interviews. Survey responses were submitted anonymously. Comments made by the participants are documented in a bulleted format. Table 2 shows the names, gender and grade level of the interview respondents. The names in Table 2 are pseudonyms of the respondents and in no way reflect their ethnicity.

Table 2. Participant Demographics (Pseudonyms)

	<u>Fourth Grade</u>	<u>Fifth Grade</u>	<u>Sixth Grade</u>	<u>Seventh Grade</u>	<u>Eighth Grade</u>
Female	Elaine Anna Maria	Betty Katy	Laura Kelley	Wendy Rhonda	Eleni Nancy
Male	Mike Bob	Budd Leif	George John	Dean Evan	Dennis Scott

Because their perspectives appeared to be consistent regardless of their grade level, this chapter is organized according to the patterns that arose from their stories, not by their school or grade. The same five questions were asked to survey and interview participants in the same order. Table 3 reflects the content of each question and the order in which it was asked to interview and survey respondents.

Survey respondents could have answered the questions in any order they chose.

Table 3. Interview and Survey Questions

Question 1	If someone came along and did not know anything about PA Theater what are 3 things you could say about it?
Question 2	List 3 of your most memorable experiences while participating in PA Theater.
Question 3	If you would encourage someone else to participate in PA Theater, list 3 reasons for doing this.
Question 4	List 3 things that you learned while participating in PA Theater that still influence your life.
Question 5	List 3 qualities that make a person successful in theater.

FRIENDSHIP/FUN/SOCIAL

Children in grades four through eight have many opportunities outside the classroom to participate in activities with their friends. The participants in the study indicated that making new friends and having fun with those friends is a very important element when choosing an activity. Three common responses to question one (see Table 3) were:

- "P.A. Theater is fun."
- "You meet new people."
- "Friendships and great memories made."

Over half of the surveys and interviews referenced making friends. As Wendy said, "It is a beautiful bonding experience; the bond within the cast is stronger than most I have ever shared with a large group of peers."

Budd said, "I met friends and made friends with people I never thought I would ever be friends with." In an interview Eleni said, "It is the best way to make new friends in a short amount of time."

Finally, Evan remarked in an interview, "The theater helps form many long-lasting friendships among kids, parents, and teachers. I want to be around these people."

Making friends with someone new can be difficult for middle school kids who tend to gravitate toward the children they know from elementary school. Surveys, as well as the interview responses, discussed how the theater was a place for new friendships to start. In an interview, Scott said,

It was the only place that I got to meet other kids from other schools, and we like had to be friends because we were working hard together and having fun. And you didn't have to act a certain way because everyone gets to know who you really are.

Rhonda also commented in her interview,

At school you are almost afraid to talk to people you don't know because they are going to think you are weird for saying hi or something. But at rehearsal you get a chance because the director makes you. You have to talk to the other kids, and then after that you are laughing, and the next time you see them, even if they are with like some cool kids, they will talk to you and that's good.

Another common response was that participating in P.A. Theater was a "fun" activity. Survey respondents stated:

- "It's a very fun environment and has a great influence on the children involved. Rehearsal is hard work but you are having fun while you are working with people you like."
- "Rehearsal is fun; I am always laughing when I am there."
- "Every rehearsal is enjoyable. You always look forward to going."
- "You'll never have this much fun the rest of your life!"
- More than half of the survey respondents stated simply that "it is fun," "I had fun" or "you'll have fun."

The interview responses revealed more details about the various *types* of "fun." Kelley said, "It is fun to be in the show and fun to go to rehearsal. At rehearsal you have to work hard but it is fun because the director makes you laugh and he treats you like a grown up."

The safety of group acceptance is what Nancy concluded was fun. Rehearsal gave her a place to be herself, and that was her type of fun. Nancy said, "Some days at school I have a bad day because of stuff like my friends, but then I know I can't wait to go to rehearsal because I am going to have fun, and I don't have to worry about people laughing at me while I am having fun." When I asked for clarification, Nancy explained that certain young ladies in her peer group had verbally assaulted her at lunch and other social settings when she was laughing; calling her stupid for thinking something was funny. She went on to explain that some of her peers think

it is "not cool" to laugh and have fun because if you do, you are acting like a "kid."

Dennis, simply stated, "It was fun." When asked to elaborate and describe what he meant by fun, he said:

It is fun because you get to do something that everyone else isn't doing. It's fun because it is special because when it is over you miss doing it. And sometimes it is only fun when you are doing it. I mean when the show isn't going on, I still see my theater friends, but we don't have the same kind of fun because we aren't going to rehearsal.

Dennis seemed to articulate a point that other interview subjects were also attempting to convey, like Anna Maria who said, "I have fun with my friends at play rehearsal, but it is different with my friends who aren't in the play; they don't understand our jokes."

Dean said, "When the show is over and you go back into the auditorium where we rehearse, you are kind of depressed because it's over and all your friends from the show are not there. It is never the same." The "fun" they were talking about is contextual and bound by time and place; these shared experiences were not portable to other circumstances or experiences.

DISCIPLINE

The need to develop and effectively utilize self-discipline at an early age relates directly to the demands,

stresses, and complexities of the specific culture in which a child lives. Thus, it is not surprising that in our fast-paced, seemingly chaotic world, children capable of developing effective self-discipline at young ages appear to negotiate the maze of family, school, friends, and community more effectively than those that struggle with this ability (Gordon, 1989).

Effective self-discipline means that a child has internalized a set of rules so that even without the presence of a parent or other caretaker, the child will act in a thoughtful, reflective manner. When individuals have ownership of and feel responsibility for their behavior, they actively practice self-discipline. These skills are ever-present and exceedingly evident in the children who participate in P.A. Theater.

Children involved in a P.A. Theater production are not only responsible for the tasks of acting, singing, and dancing; they are also responsible for ensuring that cues are not dropped and everyone is where they are supposed to be at the right time. These responsibilities aid in fostering the skill of self-discipline throughout the cast.

More than half of survey responses illustrated the importance of becoming more disciplined in order to perform at a high level. The following are survey responses:

- "Being in the theater teaches you to be disciplined because you always have to focus on what is coming next."
- "It teaches you discipline."
- "It is a lot of hard work, and you have to learn to balance your time to get everything done".
- "Excellent discipline and commitment; you have to be in charge of yourself".
- "You learn discipline because you have a lot to do: memorize lines, remember dance and you still have homework every night."
- "The director teaches you to be more self-disciplined because he keeps telling you it is your show, and he is right."
- "You have to do things on your own. You have to make yourself practice at home. You become more self-disciplined because everything has to get done in a short amount of time."

Interview responses echoed and elaborated on the information gathered from the surveys. Scott detailed how his involvement in the theater aided his development in becoming more self-reliant. Scott said:

You become disciplined. I don't mean that someone is yelling at you. I mean that you have to learn to do things yourself. The director keeps telling you the whole time that when we get done with rehearsals and we are at the theater, you will have to do this all without him. He will be there, but he keeps saying that it is our show. You find out that if you don't do stuff, it doesn't get done. And like the little kids sometimes don't do what they are supposed to do so you have to tell them.

Dean provided specific examples to illustrate Scott's comments when he talked about how circumstances can cause children to become self-disciplined. Dean said:

You become self-disciplined. He tells you at the start what he wants you to do. So at rehearsal when you first get there and put your nametag on, you start talking with your buds and then you see him just standing up front but not yelling or anything. So then I thought that Scott and I should tell everyone to get started. So we lead everyone in warm ups.

I asked Dean to give me more detail about why self-discipline is important, and he continued by saying, "You have to learn to do everything on your own because when it is time for the show the director can't be there telling everyone where to go." Both Dean and Scott discussed discipline and how it relates to the theater and the execution of their performance.

In my interview with Laura, she discussed learning skills of self-discipline and how they related to and supported her schoolwork and personal life. Laura suggested that:

Being part of the theater helps you learn how to get things done every day. I have to do a bunch of homework before rehearsal and after rehearsal. That's why I forgot my script. So I write down what I have to do and then cross it off when I am done. It's important.

When asked to explain what she meant by important, Laura said, "It's important because my mom says that if I don't get everything done then I can't be in the show."

THEATER SKILLS

Like any activity in which a child participates, theater requires a minimum level of understanding in order for the experience to be valuable. One of the primary goals of P.A. Theater is to educate student participants in theater fundamentals. In response to questions one and three (see Table 2), "Theater Skills" was a theme that emerged. The following are survey responses:

- "It taught me so much about theater, and that has really helped me in high school drama, and in the shows at high school."
- "You can conquer many fears such as auditioning, performing in front of a large audience, and missing a line."
- What you learn helps make you successful during high school auditions.
- "Going into high school drama I knew so much more because of P.A. Theater. P.A. Theater gave me better presence on stage, and helped me so much when we make up our own blocking for our scene in drama."
- "It taught me song, movement, dance that I would have never had otherwise."
- "I learned about how a theater production goes together."
- "Increased my theater skill."
- "Excellent all-kid theater production that teaches and enhances music, dance, and control of body and mind."
- "Having to fill out study guides teaches you a lot about the history of theater and what everything means."
- "You explore talents you may not otherwise try."

- "You develop confidence and stage presence. It also helps you appreciate watching other performances because you have learned and understand what goes into a production."

George's interview, which was similar to the others, revealed that theater skills begin with the audition process. George said:

Everyone should try it even if you don't get in because when you first audition you are so scared, but then it is over and you are glad you did it. The people in charge tell you stuff to do when you audition so you won't be nervous, and you are still nervous but not as much.

Betty also discussed theater skills and classified how they applied to the audition when telling her story. "The first time I came to audition, I couldn't so I went home because I was too scared. Then, when I came back the lady backstage said to just look at the clock. This year it was a lot easier." Betty later explained that she was told to focus on the clock at the back of the auditorium rather than look at the three directors who were evaluating her audition. She continued to say that she was able to get through her audition, which was something she thought she would never be able to do.

Like Betty, John explained how he was able to overcome his initial feelings of doubt and accomplish something that was thought to be beyond his skill level. John explained how he learned to dance. John said, "You learn to sing and act and

dance. When he first showed us what he wanted us to do I couldn't do it, but then I learned to do it and it was cool."

Beyond the physical actions like dancing and singing, respondents discussed how their participation in the theater exposed them to a new vocabulary.

Eleni explained that learning specific theater terms was necessary to participate in certain activities. "The director teaches you a bunch of new words like upstage and down stage so then you can understand where he wants you to go." She went on to talk about how this new knowledge allowed her to feel more connected to the other theater experiences. "You get to use what the director teaches you about the theater and its history." When asked for a specific example Eleni said, "When I went to a summer theater camp last year I already knew so much that I was able to understand what the guest speaker was talking about."

Similar to Eleni, Dean explained that due to his participation in P.A. Theater he has acquired skills that permit him to value other theater performances. "I know a lot more about theater so when I go to other plays I know what they had to do to make it happen." He added, "When you understand what is going on backstage and behind the sets you like the play a whole lot more, because you know something everybody else doesn't" Dean concluded that now when he

watches theater he notices elements of the performance that in the past went undetected.

QUALITY PROGRAM

With each production, the reputation of P.A. Theater has grown over the past 35 years. Current and former cast members commented on the importance of the quality of the theater program in two ways. First, in answer to question one (see Table 2), respondents said that P.A. Theater has a great reputation. Second, in answer to question three (see Table 2), respondents said that it is a good organization to be a part of. Survey responses included the following:

- "A bunch of kids putting on a professional show."
- "The quality of the production is fantastic."
- "You work hard then see an amazing final product."
- "It is well-respected and has a good reputation."
- "All of the hard work pays off because in the end it is a professional performance."
- "The overall feeling of accomplishment, before, during and after the show because you have been a part of something that was of a very high quality, and you know it."
- "It's such a big show! It's so amazing and unusual for kids of that age to have something that big to work for and be proud of. It's not a half-way job. We have professional sets, costumes, lights, a real theater and a great director! It feels so big and important and exciting. That's what makes P.A. Theater kids work hard because it is the best thing they have done."

- "The director has very high standards and expectations and everything is done at a very high caliber. When you are finished, you know what real quality is."

Interview subjects also discussed quality as defined by the people who come to see the shows. Budd explains, "It is a professional theater and it is real." When asked to explain what is real, he continued by saying, "You know it is an awesome thing when you are walking around after the show and people you don't know come up to you and say good job."

Leif said, "After our first show in the green room there were a bunch of letters from kids who saw it telling us what a great show it was. And also just people tell you really cool things."

Betty used the surroundings in the theater to help frame what she meant by quality. "It is very professional. The theater is really big. In the pit we have a bunch of people really playing instruments so the music sounds really good. You also get your own mirror with your name on it." Betty explained that the mirror was in the girl's dressing room where each girl was given a specific area that was designated by their name printed on a section of the make-up mirrors.

Both interview and survey respondents explained what they meant by quality. Kathy spoke of how the physical theater itself and the programs for each production increased the quality of the organization.

Everything is always done really good. Our programs are not just pieces of paper with our names in them. We have pictures and the cover is color. In the lobby there are pictures of other shows and we all get t-shirts. And we have our own chairs and mirrors in the dressing room. You feel like you are a real actress.

Eleni discussed how the quality of the program is generated from within because of the message from the adult leadership. Eleni explained, "It is a professional theater." When asked to elaborate, she continued by saying, "The director always says everyday at rehearsal that this is a professional theater and that we are not just kids but young adults. And he treats you like an adult in a real theater, not just like a student. So you start taking it serious and so does everyone else in the cast. That's what makes it so special." Clearly, many participants echoed Eleni's idea that the high quality or "professional" environment of the program encouraged students to take a serious, dedicated approach to P.A. Theater.

CHARACTER/SOCIAL SKILLS

Children have the right to develop their character so that they will know right from wrong and make decisions that will allow them to be children of character and competence. Kids do not just wake up one day and decide that they will no longer be respectful or responsible or caring. Children learn

to be respectful or disrespectful from the modeling by adults in their lives (Lickona, 1993).

Survey responses relevant to this matter of character were generally offered in one to two sentences.

- "I learned to be responsible and how to have good manners and to be polite."
- "It is not as important to be a good actor as it is to be a great person."
- "I learned how to shake hands and look at someone when they are talking."
- "To be respectful not just to adults but to your peers. Use good manners and don't say 'yeah', say 'yes.'"
- "Manners count everywhere. Character counts and manners matter."
- "Having good character is noticed by adults and that when you have manners the people around you start to show manners, especially in high school."

Interview responses were more detailed in that they gave specific examples. Elaine said, "You learn how to do things like shake hands, and my teacher always uses me as an example in class because of what the director taught me at rehearsal. When someone says how are you? You don't just say fine. You say I am fine thank you, how are you?" Elaine also said that everyone in her house is very careful not to say "yeah," now they all say "yes."

Dennis explained how you get used to using good manners and how it distinguishes you in a positive way. "I learned to

not say things like 'uh huh' and things like that. At first it was hard to remember but the more you do it, you just do it all the time." When asked why this mattered, Dennis responded by saying, "When you talk to adults, they are all impressed with what you are saying and then they listen to you. Then you are not treated just like a kid because you have manners and character."

Likewise, Evan explained how the character traits and manners he learned while in the theater are being used in all areas of his life. Evan said, "I am much more responsible now because of all the stuff we have to do to be a part of P.A. Theater. My mom told me that she is proud of me, not just because I am a better singer, but I remember to do the right thing." I asked Evan what the right thing is and he said, "Doing my jobs before my parents have to ask me a bunch of times. Also keeping my room organized."

Rhonda explained how there is a direct relationship between what she learned as a result of participating in the theater and her level of success in school:

Now that I am in eighth grade I have so many more responsibilities and much more homework. The things that I learned in the theater up to now have made me ready for this much work. It prepared me for the responsibilities I have now. It made me a person of good character.

When interviewed, Rhonda and the other respondents showed an understanding of how character traits and skills could be transferred from the theater setting to other aspects of their lives.

MOTIVATION/HARD WORK/FINAL PRODUCT

High motivation and engagement during the learning process can increase levels of student success (Blank, 1997). Yet, keeping students interested and motivating them to succeed are challenges that present themselves to even the most seasoned teachers. A student's engagement in school drops considerably as students get older (Kushman, 2000). By the time students reach middle school, lack of interest in activities becomes increasingly apparent in students, and by high school, as dropout rates attest, too many students are not sufficiently motivated to succeed.

Developmental factors and students' perceptions about their own abilities will affect their level of engagement. The older students get, the less likely they are to take risks and engage themselves fully in activities at which they are not sure they will succeed. Students' attitudes about their capabilities and their interpretation of success and failure further affect their willingness to engage themselves in unfamiliar activities (Anderman, 1997). When a student is

intrinsically motivated, s/he will undertake an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes. Students who participate in P.A. Theater described what motivates them to work so hard on an extracurricular project. It was the intrinsic feeling they get when they accomplish such a large task successfully.

Students who participated in P. A. Theater expressed their feeling of accomplishment in surveys and interviews by describing how satisfying it was to work hard for a final product that showcased their commitment. Survey data included:

- "Fun to work hard and then see a final product."
- "It's hard but totally worth it."
- "In the end it is amazing to see what you can do."
- "The performance is worth all the work."
- "In five years I never had a big part but I always felt important because I felt I was doing something important."

In an interview Mike explained, "Even though it's hard to come on Saturdays really early, I don't mind cause it's important to me."

Nancy said, "The little kids in the show don't really understand how awesome it is going to be." When I asked Nancy to explain what she meant by "it," she said, "In the end all the work you put in is like worth it because you feel great

when you are doing the show and it is something that belongs to you." Nancy's comment about her feelings was shared by a number of other interview participants who also reported the personal and private feelings of gratification they experienced when performing in front of a large group.

Interview participants often had difficulty articulating the feelings that motivate them to work so hard, except to say that the end product was worth all the hard work they gave for the months preceding the show. Eleni said, "You can't describe your feeling when you are on stage. Now at practice you know it is hard work, but it is going to be so worth it." When asked to explain specific details of what made performing worth months of rehearsal, Eleni had trouble coming up with an answer. She first commented that audience appreciation was something that motivated her during the four months of rehearsals, but then retracted that comment and said, "I can't explain it, but when you are finally performing, you know that you are doing it all by yourself and it's cool to finally see the whole thing altogether."

Wendy also said, "When the actual show time comes, it is so unforgettable. Some of the rehearsals may have been tough, but speaking from experience, in the end, all of the hard work pays off." Finally, Evan described how his involvement in P.A. Theater motivated him to complete other tasks he was not as

enthused about. "You have to work hard at rehearsal but also at school or you can't be a part of P.A. Theater. Math is my worst thing, but I did really good this time because I want to stay in P.A. Theater." Evan demonstrated that a student's intrinsic motivation to be a part of one activity can motivate him/her to succeed at another activity. In this case, Evan's desire to be part of the theater and his knowledge that his involvement was predicated on his success in school motivated him to perform at a higher level in math.

Students, ranging in age from 9-13, expressed as well as they could what motivated them to be a part of an organization that requires such a large commitment. Interview participants emphasized the connection they made between hard work and the effect it has on the final product. Because the fourth grade students had not yet performed when they were interviewed, they did not share the same feelings of the older students who were able to draw on their former experiences on stage. Students who had yet to be on stage for a performance relied on interpretations of students who were stage veterans to motivate them to reach the goals of the organization. Although the children do not all share similar past theater experiences, their common link is that they are a part of the current cast. This shared experience is what has caused the group to become a team.

BEING PART OF A TEAM

The word "team" is often used loosely; therefore, any consideration of how to achieve success as a team and the benefits of teamwork needs to be preceded by some thought on what is meant by the terms "team" and "teamwork."

Commitment to a common goal or task is sufficient reason to refer to people collectively as a team. Using this definition, our consideration of teamwork could be expanded to include many different groupings of people not customarily thought of as teams but whose functioning together has many of the same potential benefits.

Effective teamwork doesn't happen by itself. If the team is to be more than just a collection of individuals grouped around a common task, then a conscious and concerted effort to develop and nurture the team is needed (Eaker, 2002). Teamwork is a product of teams whose members have achieved a certain level of integration of values, purpose, attitudes, and action both within and among themselves (Ross, 2003). Teamwork requires enormous effort to achieve. People will participate when they understand the benefits for themselves and the team.

For upper elementary and middle school students, feeling connected to a team and learning to work together become an important part of their identity. For students, the idea of

team is manifested in a sense of community and being included in a particular group.

Survey participants answered questions three, four, and five (see Table 2), all associated with the theater experience as being a part of a team the following is a sample of survey responses.

- "Being part of a group is special because we are all working for the same thing."
- "Being part of a team; the sum of all the parts rely on personal responsibility."
- "You learn what its like to be part of a team and to hold up your part."
- "Teamwork."
- "You feeling like you belong to something special and we are all important to the success of the team."

Upper elementary and middle school students are searching for activities that will help define their character and sense of self. Bob described his feeling of belonging when he first joined the theater. "When I got my P.A. Theater shirt, I wore it to school the next day and everywhere else we went. It was cool that people knew I was in that group."

Like Bob, Laura talked about the special feeling she had when she was given something that signified her belonging to the theater group. "My sister always would wear her choral group jacket, and I wanted one, but now I have my P.A. Theater sweatshirt that I wear everywhere." Both Laura and Bob

expressed their desire to communicate their membership in P.A. Theater to the general public by wearing a shirt or sweatshirt with the theater logo. This is not uncommon for children and adults to wear a jacket, jersey, or cap of a successful sports team or organization with which they want to be associated.

Older interview participants went into greater detail when explaining what being part of a team meant to them. Kelley detailed the elements of teamwork when she said, "In the theater you always have to work together so you become a team. You have to share, cooperate, and trust each other or you can't get anything done."

George helped illustrate Kelley's point when he said, "If someone doesn't know the dance, it is the responsibility of the rest of the team to teach them." Kelley and George gave specific details and characteristics of team and teamwork.

Scott went into greater detail when he explained what being part of a team meant to him personally. The theater forces you to become a team. If someone needs help with hair or costumes, you have to help. If people aren't getting along, you pacify and unite them. And if someone does a good job, you tell them so. You learn to be a part of a team, and it is really important.

When I asked Scott to explain why being part of a team was important, he said: "You have to have a team, and everyone

has to be a part of it, or everyone will fail together. You can't do something this big alone."

The students understood the concepts of team and teamwork and why they are important for personal and group success. They also described that within the framework of the team everyone must take a leadership role, or their goals will not be accomplished.

LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership involves a tricky balance among guidance, organization, and inspiration. Bass (1985) affirmed that leadership may be categorized by four individual actions. The first, idealized influence or charisma refers to the leader as a role model, valued and well-liked by supporters. Second, inspirational motivation requires that the leader provide encouragement, importance, and challenge to the work of the group. The third element, intellectual stimulation, takes place when the leader urges the group to imagine approaches in which to find solutions. Bass concludes with individualized consideration, where a leader considers each individual's needs and assists them in their development. These attributes could be used in any situation to define leadership. Bass specifically used these terms to profile the relationship that exists between a teacher and his or her

students. This same leadership dynamic is one that occurs in P.A. Theater amongst the director and the members of the cast.

In response to survey and interview questions concerning how participants would describe P.A. Theater, why they would encourage others to participate, and what they learned during their experience that still influences their lives, interview participants gave the following responses:

- "The director inspires you to do your best."
- "The director knows so much and he will make you think and feel like a better person."
- "The director works hard and volunteers his time many days a week to make sure the students are successful."
- "The director is fantastic. He personally bonds with all of the students and makes them feel so talented and loved."
- "You'll learn a lot and you'll be humbled by the director's devotion and care."
- "The director brings out everyone's real talent."

These comments illustrate that former P.A. Theater participants understood the significance that the leader placed on the overall direction and success of the organization.

Current cast members and interview participants described how the leadership of the group helped shape their personal experience as they moved through the theater. Elaine said, "The director is strict, but he has to be so we get stuff

done. He is also fair and makes things fun." Elaine understood the leader must maintain group discipline in order to accomplish tasks.

Additionally, Anna Maria said, "All the adults are there to help you do your best. The director expects a lot from everyone, and that's why you do so good."

Like Anna Maria, Betty and Kathy felt that it was important for adult leadership in the theater to require high expectations in order to achieve a greater level of success. Betty said, "The show is so good because the director makes you do your best. He has to because sometimes we don't just do our best on our own." Kathy added, "We do a better job than we thought we could do because the director tells us we can and we believe him."

Budd explained that leadership was an important element in the rehearsal process. "The director has to be strict or we would just sit and talk and never get started with rehearsal. He tells the older kids that they need to take charge of the group without him telling them to."

Other participants felt that leadership was something they were learning and was a necessary skill in other aspects of their own lives. John said, "The director will put you in charge of a group and tell you to do something and you have to get it done or he blames you." Dennis expanded on John's idea

when he said, "The director wants you to become a leader for the show and in other things you do." I asked Dennis if he had an experience outside the theater where he had to be the leader and he said, "I was made the captain of our eighth grade science Olympiad team because I kept coming to the meetings and getting everyone started. That's something I learned during my time in P.A. Theater." Finally Evan said, "P.A. Theater teaches you to be a good leader." I asked Evan to give me specific examples and to tell me what he considers good.

I mean that the director doesn't just always do everything himself even though that would be easier for him. He gives everyone a chance to be in charge of something and tells you to not just boss people around. And you can't just yell at people. You have to be nice when you are the leader. Being a good leader means you have to do the stuff you want the others to do. You just can't tell them to do one thing and then you play around.

Evan demonstrated a clear understanding of the notion of leading by example. The interview participants were able to define the crucial aspects of what leadership is and why it is important to an organization. These can be nebulous ideas for adolescents, but the insights of this group seemed to come from the modeling that was conducted by the adults in their environment.

CONFIDENCE

Confident students are motivated, enjoy learning, have a positive attitude, are willing to participate, and will try new things. Strong self-confidence gives a child the internal resilience and resources to cope and adapt in the world. It fosters children's ability to handle everything, from dealing with other children to not getting their way. Self-confidence is a collection of positive beliefs and feelings a child has about him or herself (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006). It includes beliefs that s/he has valuable, unique characteristics; expectations that s/he will be accepted and appreciated by others and finally optimistic feelings about his/her own abilities (Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006).

In the theater environment, success is a catalyst in building esteem, in the children who participate. More than half of the 100 survey respondents indicated in response to questions why would you encourage participation in P.A. Theater, what did you learn that still influences your life, and what qualities make a person successful in the theater, that self-esteem was a benefit yielded from their theater experience. Survey participant responses included:

- "You learn to be more outgoing and confident."
- "P.A. Theater provides opportunities for students to become confident performers and people."

- "You gain confidence."
- "It gives you a boost in confidence and you try out for other things that you might not have."
- "You become confident which strengthens your character and you feel better about trying things even though you may be a bit scared."

While most interview respondents discussed how their involvement in the theater provided them with skills to become confident, several students commented on how the audition process was the first task that challenged their confidence. Mike described the audition process at P.A. Theater, "When I came to the first day of auditions and saw about a hundred kids waiting, I wanted to leave. But then I saw one of my friends come out and I knew I could do it too."

Initially there are three days of auditions where the children have to sing an audition song all by themselves for the director. Only the child is allowed into the auditorium, the parents must stay outside. There are usually anywhere from seventy-five to one hundred students auditioning on each of the three days. While Mike was filling out the audition application with his mother and waiting for his number to be called, he saw his best friend coming out of the auditorium. His friend told him it was not as difficult as he thought. This gave Mike the push to continue.

Bob also discussed the audition process in the context of having confidence. Bob said, "You have to have confidence. You have to stand in front of these three directors and tell them your name and stuff and then you have to sing. When you are done, you feel so good." When asked why he felt good when he had finished, Bob responded, "Because you did it. Even if you don't make it in the show you did something really hard to do."

Leif also discussed the audition process and how confidence is a necessity. However, Leif focused on callbacks rather than the initial audition. After children audition with a musical number, they are called back for more intensive auditions. Only seventy-five children are ultimately selected from the original three hundred to be in the cast. Leif said, "When we had to learn that dance at callbacks, I kept saying to myself I can't do this. The director kept telling us that everyone can dance, and he just wants to see if we will try, so I did." I asked Leif if he has to dance in the show. He said, "Yes, everyone has to dance. But I am way better now and it's easier." When asked why it was easier Leif concluded by saying, "The director makes it easy because he shows you how to dance a little at a time. When you do it once, you know you can do it more times."

Students who have participated in past P.A. Theater productions explained how their experience during rehearsal and on stage has given them the confidence to endeavor different activities. Rhonda said,

My first year the director kept encouraging me to smile on stage but I was really nervous. In fact the day before the first time I was on stage I threw up. Then after the show was over I couldn't wait for the next year to try out.

Rhonda saw a noticeable difference in her attitude from her first year in the theater until now. She said this year was going to be her fourth year in the organization.

Like Rhonda, Nancy explained how she was very shy and had difficulty speaking in front of people. Nancy said,

My first year I was so surprised I made it in. At the first rehearsal I cried because the director made everyone stand up and say our name to the rest of the cast. By the time we were at the theater I couldn't wait to be on stage. This year I am introducing the show all by myself. Even though you are scared you believe you can do it.

Both Nancy and Rhonda had to over-come great personal doubt and fear to participate in the theater. Their experiences during rehearsal and on stage have given them confidence because of the success they encountered during that process. Finally Wendy said, "I was so scared to sing by myself on stage the first time I had to but now I actually like it. Next year I am thinking I may even audition for the Island Performing Arts High School."

Wendy's confidence is evident as she commented on her future. Likewise, the majority of participants expressed the ways in which they grew positively through P.A. Theater. In addition to the obvious development of theater skills, students acquired new friendships, became more disciplined, experienced the importance of teamwork, gained confidence, worked hard, and perhaps most importantly, had fun.

SUMMARY

The intent of this study was to solicit the experiences of school age children participating in P.A. Theater. I believe that the stories from the interviews and surveys demonstrate the shared experiences of those who participate in P.A. Theater.

Every theme that arose in the surveys and interviews circled back to the point that participation in P.A. Theater took on a greater meaning than their years of actual participation. It held a greater importance than merely participating in an after school program.

Most of the respondents named the importance of friendship, fun, and the social aspects they found enjoyable while involved in P.A. Theater. The impact of fun on student learning and self-concept will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

I found discipline to be an overriding, powerful effect of participation in P.A. Theater, commented on by a majority of the participants. It appears that learning how to monitor their own behavior and take responsibility for their own choices allowed them to perform at high levels. It was also apparent from the data that once the P.A. Theater performances were over, this newly acquired self-discipline extended to various other aspects of their lives.

Like any activity in which children participate, theater requires a minimum level of understanding in order for the experience to be valuable. Participants stated that learning theater skills was necessary to help insure success on stage. They felt successful when strangers would praise them for their work. The theater skills they learned were useful when they participated in other stage experiences.

Students explained the benefits of taking part in a quality program. They took pride in working hard to put on an excellent production. It was important to them that the theater had a good reputation in the community.

Participants noted how their experience in P.A. Theater provided them the opportunity to learn and practice good character and social skills. These skills stood them in good stead as they learned to navigate the adult world beyond the safety of the school walls. They concluded that having good

character is noticed by adults. When you have good manners, people response positively, hold you in high esteem, and respect your decisions and actions.

Students found motivation, and hard work toward a final product to be an important aspect to the theater experience. Student's attitudes about their own abilities and their perceptions of their accomplishments and frustrations determine their willingness to attempt novel tasks. Students were willing to work harder because they feel that their work is appreciated and purposeful.

Feeling connected, and being a part of a team was mentioned as a contributing factor as a contributing factor to the development of a positive identity. A sense of belonging, and being a part of a group is imperative if students are going to exert the effort necessary to a new endeavor.

Theater participants understood the significance of leadership, and its effects on the success of the organization. Many responded positively to the adult leadership of the group, and noted the importance of a good leader. The director provided opportunities for the students to practice and demonstrate leadership skills that would help them to become successful in other aspects of their lives.

Respondents commented that the theater environment offered a catalyst in building confidence in themselves and

their abilities. Students indicated that confidence was a benefit produced from their theater experience. Because of the success they experienced as performers, as evidenced by comments from observers, students were more willing to undertake challenges they faced outside the theater.

The following chapter will discuss lessons learned from reading survey data and interviewing students. From those lessons, it will also suggest recommendations for teachers and theater directors to consider when they are working to build an atmosphere of success for their students. In addition these lessons will aid in identifying possible opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Through surveys and interviews, this study questioned both former and current students in youth theater. I encouraged student participants to share their experiences in youth theater. From students' stories, several themes emerged that presented compelling information for teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

HOW I CAME TO THIS STUDY

In the fall of 1976, I auditioned for a show at my elementary school. The show was titled The Gypsy Princess, I had a small role in the ensemble and never spoke one line on stage; however, that event had a profound effect on my life. That experience on stage was different from any other school play I had been in because of the leadership. Our director had a clear vision that this school show would be different because of the expectations he had for the 30 children in the cast. All of us in the cast believed what we were doing was more than just a school play. We believed we were a professional quality theater company because that is what our director believed. Although we were only children between nine

and twelve, our director treated us like professional adults. He encouraged us to be self-disciplined and responsible, and he provided opportunities for us to become successful leaders. I remember vividly the night of our last rehearsal when our director told us that the show was ours and that the level of success we achieved would depend on our own expectations and how we worked as a team.

From the final bow of that show I auditioned every year for subsequent shows. When I completed the eighth grade and was no longer eligible to be an actor in the youth theater, I came back and helped the director in any and every area he would allow. I taught songs and dances to younger actors and actresses, gave stage directions, blocked scenes, and managed the technical aspects of the productions. I continued in the theater program as the assistant and associate director through high school and college. When I graduated from college with a B.A. and acquired an elementary teaching position, the director handed the program over to me, and I became the director of the youth theater that had shaped so much of my early life.

As I continued in the theater organization, now as its leader, I came in contact with former theater cast members who, like me, pointed to their youth theater experiences as a benchmark in their lives. They would share stories of positive

experiences and valuable skills they acquired during their time in the cast. I realized that my experience as part of the theater organization was one shared by many other participants. I began to wonder if the same type of learning opportunities were being experienced by the current cast members, or if the stories told to me by my former cast-mates were similar because we were all part of the theater organization at a special time.

The question remained with me as I continued to direct a different show every year, each year including new children in the organization. It seemed these new theater participants were having the same positive experiences that I had 25 years earlier as a member of the cast.

Again, I wondered if these positive effects on cast members were due to the particular chemistry of that cast, or if they were felt by all cast members over the 31 years of the theater organization's existence. My past 30 years of work in youth theater, teaching elementary school for 14 of those years, and being a former member of youth theater, led me to this study. I have long believed that children who are involved in a youth theater organization that strives to exceed the goal of merely staging a show can acquire skills that will have far-reaching effects on their lives beyond the point their participation ends.

WHY IT MATTERS

Children and youth today do not live in a necessarily "kid friendly" world. They face serious problems such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and youth violence. These problems all involve ethical controllers. Solutions are complex and wide-ranging. One long-term solution to these problems might be to develop societal norms based on a limited number of core values.

Our children and youth are in desperate need of positive examples of ethical behavior, which is the cornerstone of character development. All children have the right to develop their character so that they will know right from wrong and make decisions that will allow them to be children of character and competence.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson One

Evidence from the study shows that pre-teens and teens measure the value of an organization by the amount of fun they have, the sense of belonging they feel, and the friendships they acquire during their participation. The participants repeatedly emphasized that the benefits of participating in youth theater were that it was fun, it gave them a chance to make many new friends and to belong to a recognizable, well

respected group. One past youth theater participant detailed in a survey the specific instances of fun they experienced while participating in youth theater twenty years ago. This respondent in particular recalled "what a blast it was learning how to march for a scene in a show." She fondly remembered "laughing while marching up and down the halls of the school singing while everyone else watched us." This was a meaningful event in her life because it was remembered twenty years later. Another survey respondent discussed, "the enjoyment I felt trying on costumes and how much fun we had putting them on for the first time." Many of the survey respondents shared similar stories that described having fun while in youth theater.

Interview respondents also told stories that held personal significance. Elaine described having "fun" while rehearsing lines with the director. She said, "I was laughing until I cried because of the trouble the director had remembering my character's name." These stories painted a detailed picture of what participants meant when they described their youth theater experience as fun.

Cast members endured the challenges and strict demands of the director because they felt that the value of the social benefits yielded were worth the work. Some of the social benefits included having the opportunity to find and make

friends with other children who shared similar interests by participating in an environment that was safe and allowed students to share their feelings without the risk of being ridiculed by their peers.

Wendy told how involvement in youth theater provided her with "safe" surroundings "because the director required us to get to know each other and to treat everyone with civility."

Kelley discussed how "my theater friends do not judge and tease me for all the weird things that are part of my personality." Kelley underscored how the friends made while in youth theater "accept you for who you are and will not ostracize others who do not wear trendy expensive clothes or say that you like things that you don't to be accepted." Her comments demonstrate Kelley's feeling of security while a member of a youth theater organization.

When talking about making friends, respondents discussed their need to belong and figure out where they fit in among their peers. Students expressed an overwhelming feeling of insecurity when reflecting on typical school interactions.

Laura explained: "It is difficult to make new friends at school because you feel like you have to act a certain way and like the things others liked to be included in different groups." In contrast, when discussing the theater environment, Laura explained that she looked forward to

attending rehearsal because, "The director forces everyone to become friends." She described how "the director makes you learn everyone's name so the entire cast will become familiar with one another." What made sense most to Laura was, "The director did not expect everyone to be best friends, but he did expect everyone to be kind to each other." Laura expressed, "Meeting people was easy at rehearsal." This was made possible by the director creating a social structure and requirements of the cast members to get along with one another and to be accepting of all.

Respondents also said that youth theater offered them the chance to make "life-long friendships that had been ongoing for twenty or more years." Some survey respondents elaborated, "My youth theater experience was a beautiful and unique bonding event because it was a great opportunity for parents and kids to meet and become friends with other families." Another respondent detailed, "We still vacation with families we became great friends with twenty-five years ago."

In an interview Scott talked about how friends made during participation in youth theater hold "special" significance to him. He explained, "Relationships that evolved during my five-year participation were more than just best friends, they were people that I felt would be friends

for life." Scott's comments verify how his involvement in youth theater had lasting effects on the lives of participants.

In addition, students acknowledged that belonging to a recognized organization was valuable because it helped to define their identity.

I was surprised that so many of the students who demonstrated such a high level of confidence and poise in youth theater were in fact self-conscious, shy, and unsure of themselves at school. Upon reflection, I realized that I experienced the same situation: self-consciousness in school versus self-confidence while participating in youth theater. When the students first joined the cast and they were meeting the other members for the first time, they may have appeared to be at ease with the situation; however, that was merely a façade.

Rhonda said that it is difficult to make new friends at school because, "you are afraid to talk to people" who are not part of your social circle. She was bringing to light a situation that most of the participants encountered at one time or another during their schooling. The students found it difficult to break into new social circles on their own. They expressed that making new friends was easier when there was a catalyst that would aid in breaking down certain social

barriers that exist at school. In this instance the catalyst was youth theater and their participation in this organization was something they had in common.

Rhonda explained the challenges that middle school students face when attempting to make new contacts on their own because her peers would, "think she's weird just for saying hi." She also pointed out that adult intervention is welcomed to manage potentially embarrassing situations when she described that, "the director makes you talk to other kids and that's good."

Rhonda's comments resonated with other participants who struggled with the task of trying to fit in with their peers. The teens in this study were constantly aware of and concerned with their peers' perceptions.

Nancy felt that being labeled "not cool" by her fellow classmates could ruin an otherwise successful day at school. Nancy found that the theater organization provided her with a secure atmosphere where she could "act like a kid" and "not worry about people laughing at her."

In my own experiences as an elementary school teacher as well as the director of a youth theater, I have come to understand that taking time and focusing on building social communities is paramount for the students to become a cohesive group. I believe that adults often labor under the

misconception that the teamwork displayed by students is manifested simply by bringing them together. During the rehearsal process I typically spend a number of rehearsals creating opportunities for the cast members to get to know each other. I do this by having them get into groups where a person in the group shares something about themselves. The students are willing participants and feel protected in a potentially vulnerable position because I control the activity. This feeling of security is one of the reasons the participants want to be part of the theater organization.

Another reason they want to be involved in the organization is a sense of pride to belong to a group that is esteemed by the community. P.A. Theater has been operating for over thirty years. During that time the theater has become established in the community as a quality organization that produces near professional Broadway productions. P.A. Theater has been profiled dozen of times in local newspapers and has had many feature stories run on local television news.

When students first join the theater, they are given a tee shirt with the theater's name prominently displayed on the front and back. Most wear the tee shirt home so everyone they encounter can see that they belong to the organization. This proclamation of identification as part of a particular organization, in this case the theater, was evident in all the

participants. The students demonstrated their need to show their peers outside of the theater organization that they belonged to an identifiable group. This allegiance to a particular group is necessary for the students to feel less vulnerable and self-conscious. When Bob explained that "it was cool that people knew I was in that group," he was demonstrating his need to belong. The first lesson learned from the students and discussed in this section leads to some very specific implications for teachers.

Implications for Lesson One

It is important for youth theater directors, teachers, and other adults to understand the emotional stress that preteens and teens constantly feel to be accepted by their peers. Teachers and theater directors need to allow their students time to become comfortable in a new social setting and make new friends while still establishing standards to which the students must adhere.

- Make sure that every student in the cast learns each other's name—have the students wear nametags to every rehearsal until they can demonstrate that they know everyone's name. Allow time to have them sit in different groups where they can practice names and get away from saying "hey you."

When students know each other's names, it is easier for them to engage socially. This structure also reduces the

number of students who will feel awkward when one of their peers refers to them as "that girl" or "that boy."

- Take time during rehearsals to plan team games that facilitate social interactions. Have students break into groups of four or five and give them simple tasks such as learning each other's favorite movie and food. Then have those groups report back to the entire cast.

Although such an activity takes valuable time away from rehearsing, the benefits help foster a team atmosphere, and ultimately the students are happy and more at ease with each other. In addition, the students enjoy these activities; it is a way to allow them to have some fun.

- Institute rules that require students to interact with less-familiar students. When assigning rehearsal tasks, such as practicing a particular song, specifically pair up kids who usually do not talk to each other. A simple way to do this is to have older kids work with the younger kids or have kids from different schools work with each other.

Typically, the older students in the cast, seventh and eighth graders, will gravitate toward each other because they attend the same middle school. When these students are required to collaborate with elementary students or with students from different schools, the socialization of the entire cast occurs with greater speed. Working with younger children also gives older students the chance to use their leadership skills in order to accomplish mutual goals.

This study confirms what Prescott (2003) found, that participation in drama is not only fun and natural for

children; it also encourages emotional growth, motivation, and engagement. Eighty-three percent of respondents in this study indicated that having fun and making friends was an important reason for their participation in youth theater.

Additionally, this study found that children in youth theater developed friendships that lasted far beyond their years of participation. Also, the fun they experienced while in the theater was fondly recalled decades later.

Lesson Two

The second lesson I learned from the participants was that students who participated in theater arts were conscious of both theater skills and life skills they learned. They recognized the impact and the value of those skills and were able to identify and articulate how these abilities would be helpful in the future. The students discussed how they became proficient as actors on stage because of what they learned during the rehearsal process and how this knowledge was useful in other theater settings.

They saw audition skills as very useful for participants who were pursuing involvement in other theater organizations. Survey respondents explained how "you explore talents you may not otherwise have tried" while participating. They also discussed how the experience taught lessons that "helped in

success during high school auditions." Additionally, becoming familiar with accurate theater vocabulary, and understanding stage direction, were reported as benefits by interview respondents.

Eleni described how learning and understanding theater vocabulary was necessary for participants to take stage direction from the director. She talked about knowing the difference between upstage and downstage and how that knowledge could aid in understanding "where the director wants you to go." She referred to the benefits of learning specific skills (while involved in youth theater) that were, in turn, used to improve her performance. She also explained how theater knowledge could also be useful outside the context of rehearsal. She related a story about attending a summer theater camp for the first time. A professional actress was speaking of the importance of staying open to the audience and when to counter during a cross. (See Appendix C) All of these terms referred to specific stage direction that Eleni had learned and practiced while involved in youth theater. Eleni described her feeling of belonging because of the theater knowledge she had acquired while in youth theater. She explained that she was "able to understand" what the actress was talking about regarding the theater, and this understanding made her feel connected. She was able to apply

the theater knowledge she gained while in youth theater in another situation.

Bob and Leif both described how being involved in the theater added to building self-confidence. Bob gained confidence when he completed the audition process and was proud of himself because he accomplished "something really hard to do." Leif remembered completing the callback process and the feeling of confidence when he said, "When you do it once, you know you can do it more times." Leif felt that challenging activities become "easier" with more attempts.

Similarly, Dean talked about how the lessons he learned in P.A. Theater aided in his enjoyment while watching other performances. Dean commented that when people understand all the hidden elements of a performance, they tend to "like it a whole lot more" because they can appreciate what is taking place on stage.

Survey and interview participants also discussed the value of non-theater specific skills that were useful on and off the stage. Survey respondents explained that the theater helped them become people of good character by teaching them important social skills like responsibility, respect, self-discipline, and confidence. The survey response "character counts and manners matter" illustrated the value the students placed upon social skills learned in the theater. Interview

respondents spoke of benefits produced from the character and social skills they learned.

Dennis said that when the aforementioned character traits were practiced they became habit and "you just do it all the time." He was referring to being polite and using good manners. He explained that these practices were helpful in his life when talking with adults. Dennis said that adults "were impressed with what" he was saying and that they "listen to" him. Dennis seemed anxious to demonstrate his maturity when he said, "You are not treated like a kid when you have manners and character." His final comment demonstrated that Dennis was aware of the positive effects that occurred when practicing manners.

Students made a connection between what was learned as a result of being in the theater and the effect that knowledge had on their success in school. Rhonda talked about her increased workload in the eighth grade and that she "has so many more responsibilities and much more homework" this year. She explained that her involvement in the theater has "prepared" her for the "responsibilities" she faces each day at school. Rhonda concluded that participating in P.A. Theater taught her skills that led to her to become a "person of good character."

All of the students interviewed indicated that developing social skills, good manners, and positive character traits were benefits from participating in P.A. Theater.

Mike told of how "learning to be courteous" has set him apart "in a good way" with the adults in his life. He mentioned, "My teachers and parents notice and comment on my manners." He detailed an instance when his teacher had asked, "How are you?" Mike remembered a lesson from his involvement in the theater and responded, "Fine thank you, how are you?" He remembers, "My teacher made a big deal about that." He concluded that, "Your good manners are noticeable."

John explained that he has "learned to be responsible for his own belongings." He felt this was a lesson that the director taught him through a series of lessons during rehearsal. John admitted, "One year I lost my jacket, backpack, books and a bunch of other stuff while at school." These items were replaced by his parents because he needed them for school. When John came to theater rehearsal without his script because it had been lost he recalled, the director made me pay five dollars of my own money to get a new one." John believed this was an important lesson because the director made a point that his "parents could not pay the fee for him." John has applied the lessons he learned while in youth theater to other parts of his life. He concluded by

saying that he "always stops and looks for his stuff before leaving a place."

Dennis explained how learning and practicing manners has attributed to his success in other areas. Dennis said, "When I had my audition for the School of Performing Arts, I remembered all the stuff about manners I had learned in P.A. Theater and it helped me get into the High School of Performing Arts." Dennis detailed, "When they (High School Directors) were asking me questions, I didn't say yeah. I said yes and I looked them in the eye. When we finished, I thanked everyone and shook their hands." Dennis gave examples of skills he learned during the rehearsal process. The benefits Dennis experienced exceeded the oral praise of adults in his life. He concluded his story with "When they called to tell me I got in the program they said it was because of my attitude and how polite it was."

Implications for Lesson Two

It is important for youth theater directors and teachers to understand that children need to be taught lessons that promote their knowledge of the theater and lessons that demonstrate good manners, good character, and desired social skills in order for those traits to become habitual. Theater teachers and directors need to model and reinforce the

behaviors they want their students to demonstrate. Most importantly, all adults who work with children must first model and continue modeling these desired social and theater skills themselves before they require this from their students. There are strategies that encourage the use of theater skills and the practice of good character and social skills.

- Introduce and use standard theater vocabulary when referring to elements of the stage. Prepare a study guide for the cast members which include theater vocabulary. (See Appendix C)

The term "common" or "standard" theater vocabulary refers to those terms that are used in theater textbooks and manuals and that are used by professional directors, actors, and technicians. As the director, do not invent your own vocabulary when giving stage direction to the students. By using actual theater terms, you are exposing your students to the history of the theater. They can apply this knowledge if they are involved in other theater organizations.

- Make sure each cast member clearly understands the behavior expectations. Have a list of specific standards that can be referenced when participants are being encouraged and redirected in their behavior (See Appendix D). Every adult in the organization needs to be made aware of these standards so that the same message is presented to all the students.

When children and adults both understand what the character expectations are, it is easier to redirect a

student's behavior. When the same positive character traits are practiced, they become part of the entire group's identity.

- As the adult leader of the group, be sure that you are always following your own rules. Model good character and manners. The students in the organization will notice what you do much more than what you say.

"Actions speak louder than words" is an old idiom, but very true in this case. It is very important that all the other adults in the organization are held to the same standards as the children. This will present a unified message to the students and will add validity to your message.

- Continually reinforce and redirect student behavior-never sacrifice an opportunity to teach an important lesson for the sake of putting on your show.

One of the functions of youth theater is to provide opportunities for children to perform on stage. However, producing a show is only a small part of what participation in youth theater can offer to children. The central purpose of youth theater should be the journey children take and the lessons they learn during the rehearsal process. It is not the performance; it is the journey. Theater teachers and directors must not lose sight of the trends this study revealed. Our organizations can be vehicles to not only teach students skills they will use on stage, but also skills they will use the rest of their lives.

As Viadero (2003) concluded when teachers include character education in their classroom curriculum, their students have higher scores on tests that measure cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. In addition she found that the elements of Character Education teach students skills that will benefit their lives in the future and creates safe educational environments that foster learning. Not only can students learn character education in a classroom setting but this study shows that they have the opportunity to learn these lessons while participating in youth theater. In addition, this study confirmed that participants were aware of the importance and the benefits of these life skills.

Lesson Three

The third lesson I learned from the participants was that students were intrinsically motivated to participate in a difficult, time-consuming activity when they were confident of the skills of the leader. Students welcomed adult leadership when they were able to identify the effect it had on their personal success. When the leader is organized, caring, fair, and trusted when delivering his or her message to the organization, the members feel confident in following that person.

Having a strong leader was paramount to survey participants. They attributed the success of the organization to the effectiveness of its leader. Survey respondents explained how the director "inspires you to do your best at rehearsal." "The director has a knack for creating community with a purpose. We all felt important to the success of the team." "The director was a strong leader who cared about me and wanted me to be successful on stage and in school." "The director gives you lots of encouragement and he is also really honest, strict, fair and funny." "The director cares about you and wants you to be successful on stage and all through your life." These comments suggested that participants trusted the leadership of the organization and that trust gave them the confidence to become successful. One survey participant explained that the director "would bring out the best in us. This would make us work harder so we could be successful on stage." Additionally, survey participants responded positively to the encouragement and motivation of the director, and how he affected their attitudes about how they felt about their capabilities. "You are willing to try new things like learning to dance because when the director says he believes you can do it, then you believe you can." The survey respondents also credited the leadership of the

director for making them "think and feel like they were a better person."

Interview participants also focused on the importance of an effective leader. They described situations in which the director created opportunities that intrinsically motivated them to reach goals.

Budd understood that it was important for the director to have "high expectations of the group for their ultimate success." He explained, "The director must initially motivate the cast to take the first steps on the path toward their goals." Budd ultimately felt that he continued to reach for his goals because it was important to him. Budd explained the transformation that occurs in students involved in youth theater due to the effect of the leader. The director of P.A. Theater was able to encourage the students to strive for goals in order to satisfy their own objectives.

Like Budd, Kathy discussed how she progressed from simply following orders to becoming self-motivated to complete tasks due to the realization that such activities were important to her overall success. She explained, "In some cases the director would care more about my success than I did." She concluded, "At the end of rehearsal when the director told us that this was our show, I really believed him and it was important to me."

The director of P.A. Theater created an atmosphere of high motivation and engagement during the rehearsal process. This in turn increased the level of student success, and they were willing to participate for the personal feeling of enjoyment and accomplishment the activity evokes.

Implications for Lesson Three

Theater teachers and directors should strive to create a learning atmosphere that will encourage their students to become self-motivated lifelong learners. Teachers must be effective leaders, and leading must be more than simply being the person in charge who is giving the orders. A leader has to be charismatic, encouraging, caring, and most of all, willing to let the group members become leaders. When group members become leaders, they are self-motivated and they successfully obtain their goals. Evidence from this investigation reveals strategies that promote self-motivation through leadership.

- Clearly outline the direction you want the organization to head and present obtainable goals. Everyone in the organization should understand and share the leader's vision.

The goals and direction of the group should not be a mystery to any of the members. It becomes frustrating to group members when they do not have explicit information and instruction regarding expectations, not only about their own

roles, but the overall objectives of the organization. Group goals should be challenging but practical so that everyone in the group is successful and therefore motivated to continue. Tasks should have a beginning and end so that students can measure their own success.

When discussing the rules Leif said, "The director tells us that anyone in the group should be able to lead warm-ups. He doesn't always want us to wait for him to do it." Leif was explaining the director's goal of each participant taking a leadership role and leading the rest of the group in the vocal warm-up exercises.

Evan explained his understanding of his role as a member of the group when he said, "The director is in charge of everything, but he always wants us older kids to be good leaders for the younger kids." Evan detailed some of the expectations the director had. "He tells us to use leadership skills like showing people how to do something and being encouraging, and not just bossing people around."

Laura said that she was able to assess the group's achievement by the benchmarks outlined by the director. "He always tells us how many days we have until the show opens. It makes you nervous but you know you have a lot of work still to do." Laura continued to say, "At the beginning of rehearsal the director tells you what you should know by the

end, like learning all the words to a song. Then you know what to do that day."

In her interview Nancy said, "Learning to dance was not as hard as I thought." She explained, "The director only teaches a little bit at a time and then we put it all together and we know the dance."

- Allow group members to transition into leadership roles by encouraging them to lead small groups within the organization. This can take away from rehearsal time, but it adds to cast members' personal motivation when they are in charge of various elements of the production.

When allowed to be in charge of small group tasks, students take personal pride in the success of the group. This begins to foster the intrinsic feelings of pride, which makes their theater experience more personally valuable.

Eleni recalled one of her fondest memories while participating in P.A. Theater when she said, "The director put me in charge of our dance group and I would take the other kids outside and teach them the dance." She explained that she was proud of herself because she was given the responsibility of teaching others. "It was fun to rehearse the dance and then show the director what we had done. He was always amazed."

Budd remembered a special moment when the director had given him the task of creating a unique handshake for a particular scene in the show. "Me and Dean came up with this

hand shake that had a bunch of moves in it. It was really cool on stage. For fun we did it in the green room every night before the show." Budd felt involved when he was permitted to create something on his own.

- Lead by example and be overt about leadership style. Explain the elements of strong leadership, as leadership is occurring. For example, tell students it is important to be punctual, and always be on time.

Youth theater provides a number of teachable moments throughout the entire process. It is important that the director take advantage of every opportunity to educate the cast. Directors and teachers take time to explain why things are done as they are. Be specific when explaining the behavior of effective leaders. Lessons need to be obvious so that students will be able to apply leadership lessons in their own lives.

As Bass (1985) affirmed leadership may be categorized by four individual actions; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These attributes could be used in any situation to define leadership. Bass specifically used these terms to profile the relationship that exists between a teacher and their students. This same leadership dynamic is one that occurs in youth theater amongst the director and the members of the cast. This study shows that participants in

youth theater recognized the importance and influence of leadership as 66% of the respondent confirmed.

SUMMARY

There is a clear need for today's youth to be exposed to educational character development opportunities in a safe, positive environment with high expectations. One effective way to foster such opportunities is through a successful youth theater program. Within the context of a respected organization, the evidence in the study shows that students gain self-confidence, experience a sense of belonging, make new friends, and perhaps most importantly, have fun.

Through the implementation of both theater skills, such as specialized vocabulary and stage directions, and life skills, which are modeled by adults in the organization, students apply new abilities and insights to other aspects of their lives, as well as their futures. The investigation showed that of the social skills gained by participants through PA Theater included responsibility, manners, respect, self-discipline, and confidence. Furthermore, the adult members of the organization are sources of learning for students and those in leadership role models should be constantly aware of the messages implicit in their actions. Participants in this study explicitly stated that they were

intrinsically motivated to partake in unfamiliar and demanding activities because they were confident in the skills of the leader. Successful leadership involves organization, compassion, fairness, and trustworthiness. Additionally, a crucial quality of an effective leader includes a willingness to encourage each group member to become a leader.

In the context of this collective case study, the findings suggest that the participants developed valuable skills, which benefit them in future theater projects, but more importantly, throughout their entire lives. This is perhaps, a rehearsal for life lessons in how to become a member of adult organizations, to forge a vision of how communities of learning work to create meaning in individuals' lives.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study illuminates key aspects of the effects of students' participation in youth theater, it also raises questions. This research was limited by time and location. For example: long-term or longitudinal research might reveal whether students who have these experiences while participating in youth theater also benefit in other aspects of their lives over time. We might also find out whether

adults, while participating in theater programs, share the same experiences to the same extent as children and youth do.

This research specifically looked at youth theater. Further research could examine effects of other youth organizations, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Little League. In other words, what characteristics of the experience that have been identified here are present and to what extent are they present, for the other experiences to be as meaningful to the participants' lives?

This study consisted of 100 surveys of current and past youth theater participants, and 20 interviews of current participants. Would a study of a larger participant base reveal the same results? Additional research is needed to determine if there are additional effects or themes that would have become apparent through a larger study, perhaps across theater groups. For example, if questions had been framed differently, would past participants have talked more about the "lasting" effects of youth theater on their adult lives?

Additional research consisting of quantitative data, perhaps through pre and post survey data collected before and after performances could be used to authenticate these cumulative data.

Finally, it is the researcher's speculation that students continue to gain positive experiences the longer they

participate in youth theater. It is possible that the cumulative influences of youth theater have a greater impact on students' lives than that conferred by one experience. This research was not designed as a long-term study, so additional research of longer duration might be necessary. It would be interesting to document students' perceptions of their experiences over a longer period of time.

CONCLUSION

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to conduct this research. It reaffirmed my beliefs that a youth organization can offer more skills to its participants than that for which it was initially designed. In communities across America, there are growing numbers of groups that offer children the chance to experience many different adult-structured activities. From soccer and karate to ballet and chess, parents are enrolling their children in a variety of after-school programs with the hope of broadening their children's knowledge and world experiences. These extracurricular organizations offer the opportunity and the responsibility to teach young participants more than just skills necessary to be successful in arts and athletics. These organizations should teach skills that will ensure the students' success in life.

REFERENCES

- Anderman, L. & Midgley, C. (1997). Motivation and middle school students. In J. Irvin (Ed.), *What current research says to the middle level practitioner* (pp.41-48). Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.
- Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bell, N. (1991). Gestalt imagery: A critical factor in language comprehension. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 41, 246-261.
- Brizendine, N.H. & Thomas, J.L. (1982). *Learning through :dramatics: Ideas for teachers and librarians*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx.
- Caine, G. (2004). Getting it! Creativity, imagination, and learning. *Independent School*, 63, 10 - 18.
- Catterall, J. (1998). Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement? A response to Eisner. *Art Education*, 5(3), 6 - 11.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cushman, K. (2003). In their own words. *Principal Leadership*, 4(3), 45 - 48.
- Damasio, A.R. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason and the human brain*. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Daniels, E., Arapostathis, M. (2005). What do they really want? Student voices and motivation research. *Urban Education*, 40(1), 34 - 59.
- Davenport, J.D. (1999). The arts: a means for developing literacy. *Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 66, 11 - 15.
- Davis, M. (2003). What's wrong with character education? *American Journal of Education*, 110, 32 - 58.

- DeRoche, E. F. & Williams, M. M. (1998). *Educating hearts and minds. A comprehensive character education framework*. Lanham, MD: Corwin Press, Inc.
- DeRoche, E. F., & Williams, M. M. (2001). *Character education: A primer for teachers*. Allen, TX: Argus Communications.
- Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (2002). *Getting started: Reculturing schools to become professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Eisner, E. (2002). *Arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (1998). Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement? *Art Education*, 5(1), 7 - 15.
- Erickson, F., & Shultz, J. (1992). Students' experiences of the curriculum. In P.W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (pp. 150-170). New York: Macmillan.
- Glass, R. & Nemeth, P. (2003). You gotta have art! *American Teacher*, Retrieved March 5, 2006 from http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_teacher/arts_feature.html
- Gordon, T. (1989). *Discipline that works: promoting self discipline in children*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Fiske, E., (ed.) (1999). *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (pp.iv - 5, vii - xii) The Arts Education Partnership; The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Education.
- Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., & Cooley, C. (2006). Teacher expectations of students' classroom behavior across the grade span: Which social skills are necessary for success? *Exceptional Children*, 72, 153-167.
- Lickona, T. (1992) *Educating for Character, How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. New York, NY: Bantam
- Lickona, T. (1993). The return of character education. *Educational Leadership*, 51, 6 - 11.

- Luddy, J. (2000). Students learn respect - Thanks to good manners! *Education World*, Retrieved August 10, 2005, from <http://www.education-world.com>
- Luftig, R. L. (1994). *The schooled mind: Do the arts make a difference? An impirical evaluation of the Hamilton Fairfield SPECTRA+Program, 1992-93*. Center for Human Development, Learning, and Teaching, Miami University, FL: Oxford Press.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McMaster, J. (1998). Doing' literature: Using drama to build literacy. *Reading Teacher*, 51, 574 - 584.
- Mecca, A., N., Smelser, J., & Vasconcellos, J. (1989) *The Social Importance of Self-Esteem*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Morris, R. V. (1998). Common threads: How to translate best practice into teaching. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 22, 11-18.
- Morris, R.V. (2003). Acting out history: Students reach across time and space. *International Journal of Social Education*, 18, 44-51.
- O'Brien, S. & Sebesta, J. (2002). *Contemporary trends in theatre education: researching Arizona's elementary schools' commitment to theatre arts*. Retrieved August 8, 2005, from <http://aep-arts.org/Champions.html>
- Oldfather, P. (1994). *When students do not feel motivated for literacy learning: How a responsive classroom culture helps*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED365966)
- Pearson, Q. M. & Nicholson, J. L. (2000). Comprehensive character education in the elementary school: Strategies for administrators, teachers, and counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development*, 38, 243 - 249.

- Pierangelo, R., & Giuliani, G.A. (2006) *Creating confident children. Using positive restructuring in your classroom*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Pope, C. (2001). The after school lives of children. *Human Development*, 44(1), 59 - 62
- Rasband, J. (1999). *Manners matter: Pointers for parents*. Retrieved August 10, 2005, from <http://conselle.com/>
- Regan, F. S. and Weltsek, G. (2000). Youth theater in America: A second look. *Stage of the Art*, 12, 27 - 33.
- Roe, B. D., & Ross, E. P. (1988). *Teaching reading in today's elementary schools*, 4th ed. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Ross, B. L. (2003). Beyond success: Achieving synergy in teamwork *Journal For Quality And Participation*, 26(3), pp. 23-27
- Schwarzman, M. (2002, May). *Why not football? The politics of youth arts programs in America*. Community Arts Network. Retrieved August 8, 2005, from <http://www.communityarts.net/>
- Seidman, E., Allen, L., Aber, J., & Feinman, J. (1994). The impact of school transitions in early adolescence on the self-system and perceived social context of poor urban youth. *Child Development*. 65, 507 - 522.
- Smith, E. C. (1982). *Learning through dramatics*. Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press.
- Sternberg, P. & Garcia, A. (1989). *Sociodrama: Who's in your shoes?* Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Storz, M., & Nestor, G. (2003). Insights into meeting standards from listening to the voices of urban students. *Middle School Journal*. 34(4), 11 - 19.
- Swanson, B. (1991). *An overview of the six national education goals*. Rockville, MD. (ERIC Digest. ED334714)

- Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Viader, D. (2003). Nice work. *Education Week*, 22, 38 - 42.
- Walling, D.R., (2001). *Rethinking visual arts education: A convergence of influences*. Phi Delta Kappa. Retrieved March 5, 2006 from URL:
<http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kwal0104.htm>

APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Directions: Please answer each of the following questions.

1. If someone came along and did not know anything about P.A. Theater what would you say about it?
2. What was your most memorable experience during your involvement in P.A. Theater?
3. Would you encourage someone else to participate in this organization?
Why or why not?
4. During your involvement in P.A. Theater did you learn anything that you still use?
5. What qualities make a person successful in theater?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONS

If someone came along and did not know anything about P.A. Theater what are 3 things you could say about it?

Place a 1 alongside the item you feel is most important followed by a 2 then a 3.

List 3 of your most memorable experiences while participating in P.A. Theater.

Place a 1 alongside the item you feel is most important followed by a 2 then a 3.

If you would encourage someone else to participate in P.A. Theater, list 3 reasons for doing this.

Place a 1 alongside the item you feel is most important followed by a 2 then a 3.

List 3 things that you learned while participating in P.A. Theater that still influence your life.

Place a 1 alongside the item you feel is most important followed by a 2 then a 3.

List 3 qualities that make a person successful in theater?

Place a 1 alongside the item you feel is most important

followed by a 2 then a 3.

APPENDIX C**THEATER VOCABULARY**

Appendix C

Theater vocabulary

Above Upstage or away from the audience. Actors crossing above a prop or piece of set are keeping it between them and the audience.

Acoustics 1) The science of sound. 2) The factors and characteristics of a room or space that determine the sound capabilities and properties of that room.

Act 1) What an actor does. 2) Segments of a performance, usually separated by an interval. So the first part is Act 1, the second Act 2, and so on.

Ad Lib A departure from the script in order to cover an unexpected situation or hide a lapse of memory.

Add To fade up lighting channels not already plotted in the current state.

Amplifier An electronic device that amplifies sound signals to a point where they are great enough to be heard through a speaker.

Apron A part of the stage projecting towards or into the auditorium. In proscenium stages, the part of the stage in front of the curtain. (UK) See Forestage.

Arc 1) A luminous discharge between two separate carbon ends. 2) Old type of followspot in which the light was generated by a carbon arc discharge. Inefficient and inconvenient because the carbon rod had to be continuously adjusted and replaced, even during performances.

Assistant Stage Manager Abbrev. to ASM. According to the size of the show, there may be one or more ASM's who assist the Stage Manager with properties and other activities on stage.

At Rise The action occurring on the stage when the curtain

Back Drop Cloth, usually painted, suspended from the flies at the rear of the stage. Also Back Drop.

Backstage In proscenium theatres, the area behind the proscenium arch. The term also refers to such areas in non-proscenium theatres and to any part of the stage not in the acting area during a performance.

Baffle 1) A wall of timber or board that separates sound sources such as speakers from surfaces that might reflect sound back and thus to cancel out the sound. 2) A metal plate or strip within a lantern that stops light exiting the lantern housing through openings other than the lens, usually the cooling vents.

Basic Situation The fundamental premise or story line on which a play is based.

Batten Piece of wood attached to, or metal pipe slipped into a sleeve at the bottom of, a flown cloth to straighten it and keep it taut.

Blackout A total, sometimes sudden, extinguishing of the stage lights, often at the end of a scene or act.

Blinders Audience blinders - high intensity flood lights mounted to focus on the audience. Turned on to create an impact on the audience and perhaps cover a scene change.

Blocking The process of roughing out the moves to be made by the actors.

Board Lighting or audio control panel.

Book 1) Noun - Alternative term for the scripts. 2) Noun - The prompt copy. 3) Noun - The part of a musical show conducted in dialogue. 4) Verb - To arrange the services of actors and musicians.

Boom A vertical lighting bar.

Border Flown scenic piece or curtain designed to conceal the upper part of the stage and its machinery or lighting equipment.

Bounce 1) To bring in the House Curtain fast, then take it out again immediately. 2) Lighting term describing light beams reflected off the stage or set.

Brake Lever on a counterweight system that locks the rope, so stopping accidental movement.

Break A Leg Traditional good luck greeting between cast and crew before a performance.

Breaking Character When actors do or say something which is inconsistent with the character they are portraying.

Bring Up To increase the intensity of the lanterns.

Build 1) To increase the intensity of the lanterns.

Call 1) A notification of a working session e.g. rehearsal call.
2) A request for an actor to come to the stage as his entrance is imminent, formerly by call boy, now by loudspeaker system in the dressing rooms.

Centre Line An imaginary line running from the front to the back of the stage through the exact centre of the proscenium arch.

Centre Stage The middle of the acting area. Abbrev. CS.

Choreographer Designs and creates the dance elements and arrangements for a show.

Crew Loose term covering all those who work on a show backstage.

Cross The movement of an actor across the stage in any direction.

Cue The signal that initiates a change of any kind during a performance.

Cue Sheet A list showing the cues in correct order as they are to be carried out.

Cue-to-cue A technical rehearsal specifically for the technical crew to work fully through the cues, often by skipping parts of the script. Also Top And Tail Rehearsal.

Curtain 1) The drapery which hides the stage from the audience. See House Curtain. 2) The action of the House Curtain coming down at the end of an Act or the play. 3) The last piece of action on the stage before the House Curtain comes down.

Cyclorama A perfectly plain screen with a uniform surface extending around and above the stage to give a feeling of infinite space. It can also be used for the projection of

designs and shadows. In English repertory theatres it was traditionally made of concrete and thus the back wall of the stage.

Dark A theatre which is temporarily or permanently closed to the public.

Director Has the ultimate responsibility for the interpretation of the script through his control of the actors and supporting production team.

Downstage The part of the stage closest to the audience. Abbrev. D/S.

Dress Rehearsal Also known simply as the 'dress', the final rehearsal before the performance. The actors are in costume and all technical problems should have been sorted out.

Elevation A working drawing usually drawn accurately and to scale, showing the side view of the set or lighting arrangement.

Epilogue A speech to the audience by an actor after the formal action of the play is concluded.

Exit 1) The process of leaving the stage. 2) Point in the script at which an actor leaves the stage.

Fire Curtain The heavy fire-proof curtain that, in an emergency, is dropped at the front of the stage, effectively sealing the stage from the auditorium and thus slowing the spread of flames.
Jargon - The Iron.

Flys 1) The space above the stage in which scenery, lanterns and so on are hung invisible to the audience. 2) The counterweight system.

Fly Man Crew person who operates the flys.

Fourth Wall The imaginary wall which separates the audience from the stage in a proscenium theatre.

Freeze To stop all action and movement on stage, usually during applause or just before a lighting cue.

Gobo A metal plate with a pattern punched out of it and placed in the gate of a profile spot to produce an image or outline on stage.

Green Room Room adjacent to the stage (.i.e. the Green) for the actors to meet and relax. One explanation for 'green' is that in medieval days, when strolling players gave performances on the village green (hence 'Green'), a tent would be set-up for them to change costumes in (hence 'Green Room'). Perhaps the best known Green Room is at Drury Lane Theatre in London, and it is possible that it was once draped or painted in green, and this is the origin. Another possible theory is because of the Green Baize as described above. Green, the color, is also known to be psychologically soothing.

Grid 1) The arrangement of wooden or metal slats above which are mounted the pulley blocks of the flying system. 2) The system of trusses and bars from which lanterns are hung. (Concert)

Groundrow 1) A row of lanterns on the floor of the stage for lighting the bottom area of a cyclorama or cloth. This is usually masked by a scenic groundrow. 2) Shaped pieces of scenery used to mask actor crossover.

Hanging Attaching flying pieces to the appropriate bars.

House 1) The audience. 2) The auditorium.

Macbeth The play that it is unlucky to speak the name of, or to quote from, in a theatre. Instead it is known as by euphemisms such as 'The Scottish Play' or 'The Unmentionable'. This tradition dates from the first opening night of the play in 1606 when the boy actor playing Lady Macbeth died backstage during the show. Since then the play has apparently been dogged by bad luck.

Musical Director Abbrev. to MD. The person in charge of the musical content of a show.

Method Acting A style of teaching acting formulated by Stanislavsky.

MIDI Abbrev. for Musical Instrument Digital Interface. A common standard communication protocol that allows different brands of electronic musical instruments and equipment to 'talk' to, and control, each other.

Offstage Backstage area outside the performance area.

Onstage 1) Inside the acting area. 2) Towards the centre line.

Open Circuit An electrical circuit that has been broken or interrupted and so cannot pass a current or signal.

Orchestra 1) The musicians who provide the musical backing to a show. 2) The ground floor seating in an auditorium. Also Stalls.

Orchestra Pit The sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra play during a performance. Also The Pit.

Overture The music which begins a performance.

Pace The speed at which the story and action in a play runs.

Pancake Basic make-up item, available in a range of shades, used the world over.

Period When all the facets of a production are carefully aimed towards representing a specific period in history.

Piano Rehearsal Rehearsal for a musical show where the music is provided only by a pianist, to save calling the orchestra and incurring the additional cost.

Prompt The person who, during the performance, feeds actors lines if they 'dry'. Usually from the down stage stage left position - hence Prompt Corner. In opera it was traditional for the prompt to be positioned with the head projecting through a small slit cut in the stage floor down stage centre, with a wooden hood or cover to mask the prompt person from the audience.

Prompt Book Fully annotated copy of the play with all of the various production details, used by the Stage Manager during the performance to co-ordinate all the various technical and staging departments. Also Prompt Book.

Properties Abbrev. to Props. Any item or article used by the actors other than scenery and costumes.

Props Table Table in convenient offstage area on which all props are left prior to use.

Proscenium Arch Abbrev. to Pros. The archway which separates the stage and the auditorium.

Rag Slang for the House Curtain.

Rail Bottom or top batten in a flat.

Rake The incline of a stage floor or seating area away from the horizontal. Originally introduced as a way of improving sightlines to the stage under poor lighting conditions last century.

Scene 1) A stage setting. 2) The blocks or parts into which a play is divided. 3) A particular setting of stage lighting that can be reproduced on demand. Also State.

Scrim Finely woven fabric which can be translucent or opaque using lighting from different angles. Small pieces of a scrim material is often used in front of lanterns to soften the light beam.

Script The text of the show, also containing information about settings, characters, costumes etc. to aid the cast and crew.

Set 1) Verb - To set is to prepare the stage for the coming scene by placing everything in its correct position. 2) Noun - The set is all the scenery, furniture and props used to create a particular scene. 3) When an actor has learnt their lines and stage directions they are 'set'.

Set Dressing 1) The process of putting all sets, props and so on in their correct positions on the stage. 2) Props used to create atmosphere rather than having a function.

Smoke Machine A device that produces the effect of smoke on stage. It operates by forcing a liquid mixture into a very hot chamber. The mixture, commonly called 'juice' or 'fog juice', becomes a gas and is expelled through a small nozzle. It emerges as a cloud of smoke. Also Fogger.

Special A lantern performing a particular function, such as a fire 'special' or a window 'special'.

Spotlight A lighting instrument in which the angle and beam size can be controlled.

Stage 1) The part of the theatre on which the actor performs. 2) The acting profession - an actor is said to be 'On The Stage'.

Stage Directions Directions in the script about how the playwright intends actions or arrangements to be carried out.

Stage Left Abbrev. to SL. The left side of the stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Prompt Side, Camera Right.

Stage Manager The member of the production team responsible for the smooth running of a performance.

Stage Right Abbrev. to SR. The right hand stage as viewed by the cast facing the audience. Also Opposite Prompt, Camera Left.

Stage Screw A screw for fixing braces to strong stage floors.

Teaser Originally the border of scenery behind the front curtain for masking the flies, now the term refers to any short drop used as masking.

Thrust Stage Type of stage which projects into the auditorium so the audience can sit on at least two sides.

Trap A trap door opening into the area below stage which can be used for special effects.

Upstage Abbrev. to US. The part of the stage furthest away from the audience.

Upstaging To deliberately draw focus on stage.

Walk Through Rehearsals at which the actors go through entrances, moves and exits to make clear any changes or alterations that made be necessary.

Wardrobe General name for the costume department, its staff, and the accommodation they occupy.

Wings The sides of the stage concealed from the audiences' view.

APPENDIX D

P.A. BEHAVIOR STANDARDS

Appendix D

P.A. Behavior Standards

As a member of the theater you represent yourself and every other member of the organization.

We will work to:

- Always be on time. Remember if you are on time you are late so arrive a few minutes early.
- Be polite. Manners matter so you will use them when you are talking to adults, peers, and of course your parents.
- Be aware of other people's feelings. We all want this to be a safe atmosphere and for everyone to feel that they belong.
- Learn everyone's name. It is very important. It is polite and shows that you care about who that person is.
- Become a team. It is necessary for your success to cooperate and work together. Something this big cannot be done alone.
- Make friends. Every rehearsal introduce yourself to one person you do not know very well.
- Encourage each other. You will be learning new things every rehearsal and it can be difficult to try something new i.e. dancing and singing. Recognize and give positive comments about each days progress.

- Finally, this is your show. The people around you are your teammates and they will support you and you will support them. When arriving or leaving rehearsal remember to say hello and goodbye.

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM

Appendix E

Consent form

University of San Diego/San Diego State University

My name is Mr. Arapostathis and I am conducting a research study as part of a doctoral program that I am enrolled in at University of San Diego and San Diego State University. I hold a B.A. and an M.A. in education from San Diego State. My dissertation chair person is Dr. Leif Fearn of San Diego State.

The purpose of this study is to identify the effects of participation in theater arts on upper elementary and middle school students. I will be randomly selecting 20 students who are currently members of Peter Pan Jr. Theater in which to interview.

During this study, I will interview your child asking them a series of 5 questions regarding their beliefs about participating in a theater arts program. I will use audiotape and a laptop computer or paper and pencil to record the data. The interviews will be conducted during rehearsal at Spring Valley Middle School during regularly scheduled rehearsal time. Monday through Friday at 4:30pm - 6:30pm or on Saturday from 8:00am - 11:00am. Each interview will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The questions will be focused on your child's thoughts and feelings about participating in Peter Pan Jr. Theater.

None of the procedures [or questionnaires, if applicable] used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

There very little risk to your child if they choose to participate, however some children may be uncomfortable talking about their feelings and may get frustrated if they think their answers are not the "right" ones. To try and control these risks I will explain in detail to your child that they are volunteers and my drop from the study at anytime they choose. In addition I will explain that there are no right or wrong answers.

Your child's participation could be beneficial to them. By sharing their feelings they may have a chance to reflect on their experiences and discuss openly what they feel is worthwhile or not. I cannot guarantee, however, that you or your child will receive any benefits from this study.

All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the research's home office, and it will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study. The researcher is the only person who will have access to any of the subjects' personal information concerning the study participation. Also, the researcher will use a pseudonym for each participant and alter any other potentially identifying aspects.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision of whether or not to allow your child to participate will not prejudice your future relations Peter Pan Jr. Theater. If you decide to allow your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue his/her participation at any time.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact an IRB representative in the Division of Research Administration at San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

If you have questions regarding your child's rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may call the Institutional Review Board at San Diego State University for information. The telephone number of the Committee is 619-594-6622. You may also write to the Committee at: SDSU Institutional Review Board, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182-1643. USD Office of the Vice President and Provost, University of San Diego, 5998 Alcala Park, San Diego, CA 92110. 619-260-4553.

Consent to Participate. The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form as signified by the Committee's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to allow your child to be in the study

and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. *You have also been given a copy of "The Research Participant's Bill of Rights." You have been told that by signing this consent document you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Subject

Signature of Parent/Gaurdian

Date

Location (e.g. La Mesa , Ca)

Signature of Principle Researcher

Date

Signature of Witness

Date